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No 42

# Backwoods Home magazine

HOLIDAY  
CRAFTS  
ISSUE

*practical ideas for self-reliant living*

A DOZEN GREAT HOLIDAY CRAFT IDEAS

*Plus*

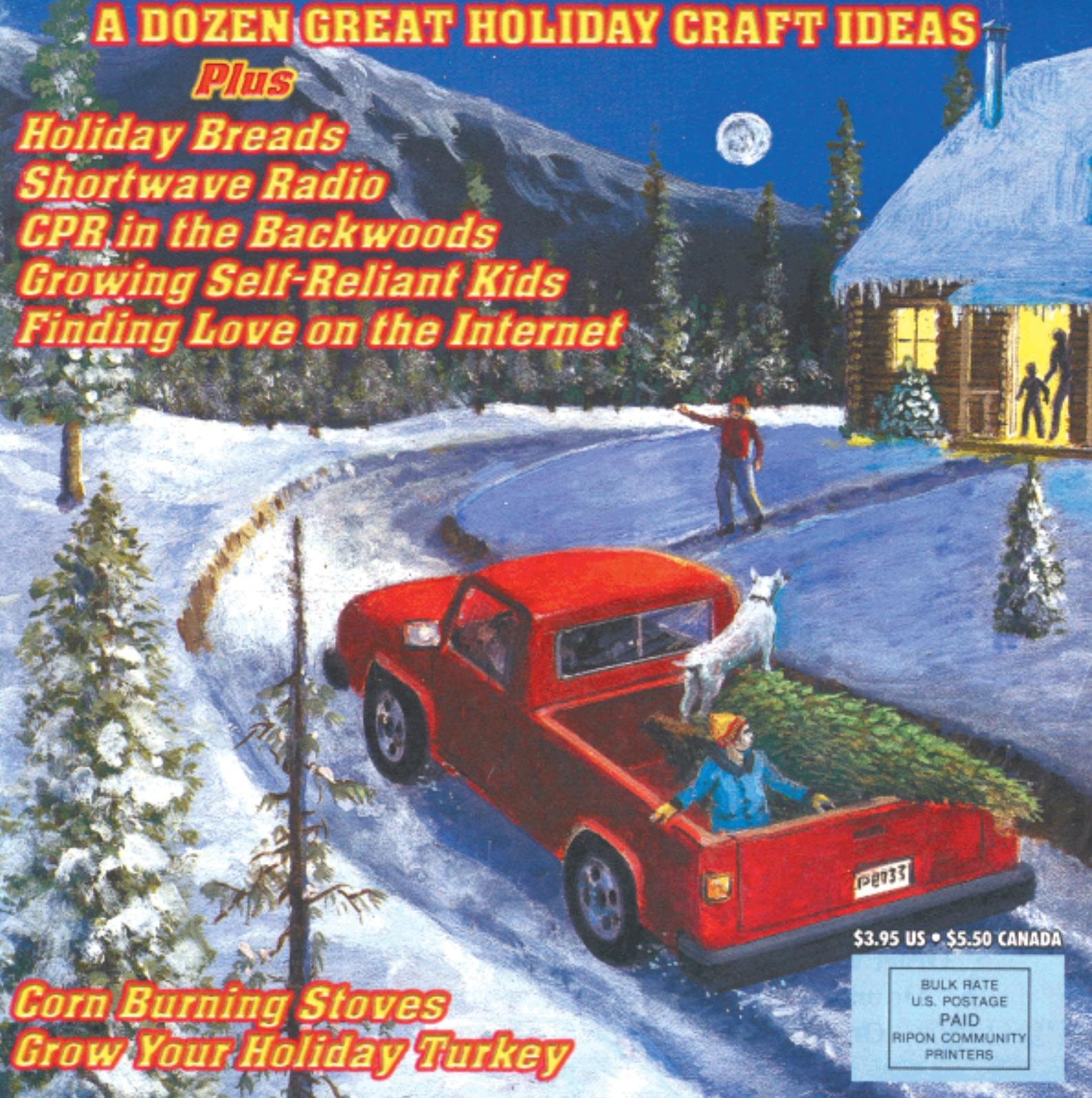
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*Corn Burning Stoves*  
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# Keep the cooks happy with these easy-to-make kitchen helpers

By Rev. J.D. Hooker

**A**fter all of the decorations and gift giving, the brightest holiday memories seem to revolve around the dining table and the kitchen—turkeys, hams, geese and all of their trimmings, breads, pies, pastries, and all of the other mouth-watering delights.

Unless you happen to be one of the holiday cooks, however, you might not realize just how much real work goes into the preparation of one of these holiday feasts. Especially when you consider how New Year's comes right on the heels of Christmas, which comes right on the heels of Thanksgiving.

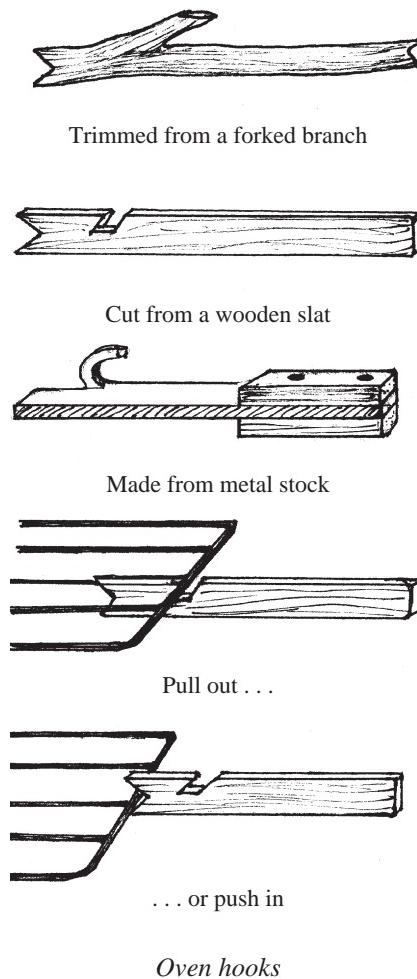
Sure, all of this preparation is generally considered as pretty pleasant work. But it's still work, enjoyable or not. So, for this special issue, it might be a reasonable idea to show you a few easy-to-make kitchen gadgets that can make some of these cooking tasks just a trifle easier.

Remember, this whole season, Thanksgiving right through New Year's, is really supposed to be a time of celebration, giving thanks to our Creator, sharing with friends and relatives, and expressing the joy and happiness in our lives.

So consider making up a few of these simple devices to distribute among the holiday cooks and bakers in your circle *before* the start of the season, so they can have the use of them as they prepare all of those wonderful holiday treats. I've found these small, unexpected early gifts to be greatly appreciated.

## Oven hooks

The simplest of these kitchen helpers is an oven hook, a very handy



item for any baker. Whether fashioned from wood, iron, or aluminum, this easily made tool is a real finger saver.

One method of forming this oven hook involves nothing more than selecting a forked stick, with one limb of the fork being slender enough to slip between the wires of the oven rack. Cut this slender side of the fork off to leave about a  $\frac{3}{4}$ " stub, and trim off the other side for a foot-long handle. Now, just notch the end of the stick so the tool can also be used to push the rack back in, and you're finished already.

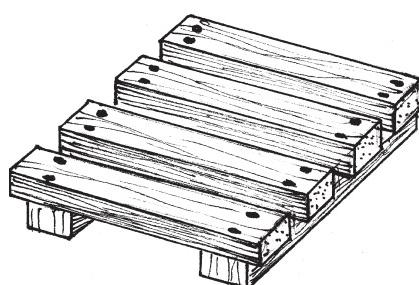
A second way to make a wooden oven hook is to use about a foot-long hardwood slat that is thin enough to slip between the oven rack's wires. Just fashion a deep V-shaped notch in one end with a diagonal notch (as shown) about an inch further up the handle.

Iron, mild steel, or aluminum flat stock ( $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide by  $\frac{1}{8}$ " thick works well) can also be handily fashioned into an oven hook. Just use a hacksaw to cut about a 1" slot in the end of an 8" - 14" piece of flat metal stock. Use pliers, a hammer, or some other tool to bend the metal on one side of the slot to a C shape. The addition of a riveted or bolted-on wooden handle, or even a tightly wrapped leather handle, makes for a fancier gift.

## Wooden cooling trivets

Another handy kitchen helper is a set of quickly fashioned wooden cooling trivets. These can be built in various sizes to fit pie and cake pans, muffin tins, loaf pans, or whatever, but the basic structure of this simple device remains the same.

A pair of wooden slats (pieces of 1x2 furring strips work great for this) are laid down an appropriate width apart. Next, drill pilot holes and use wood screws to attach similar slats of a proper length atop these. These top slats need to be equally spaced, usually between  $\frac{1}{2}$ " and  $\frac{3}{4}$ " apart. Not only do these trivets allow for proper air circulation, for quicker cooling, they also prevent the bottoms of the



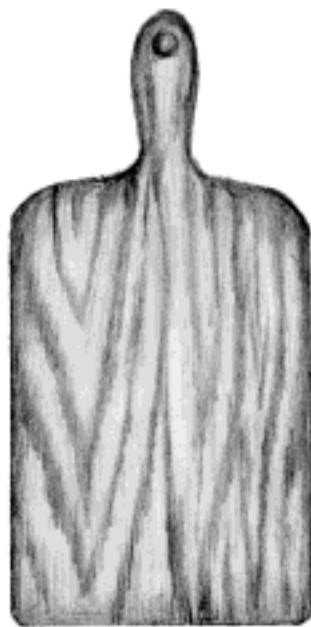
Wooden cooling trivet

hot pans from scorching the cook's counter or tabletop.

## Cutting boards

Most holiday meal preparations include a lot of chopping, slicing, dicing, and mincing chores. A properly-fashioned cutting board can be a big help. "Properly-fashioned" mostly means selecting the right sort of wood. Woods in the oak, cedar, and pine groups should be avoided, as these will sometimes impart an unpleasant taste to the foods, while woods such as ash, birch, beech, maple, and hickory are generally preferred.

For best results, select a knot-free board between  $\frac{3}{4}$ " and  $1\frac{1}{4}$ " thick, 10" or 12" wide, and between 18" and 20"



*Cutting board*

long. Use a band saw, jig saw, coping saw, or whatever to round off the corners and form a comfortable handle, then sand all of the edges nice and smooth.

You can just keep wiping coats of vegetable oil on the cutting board until the wood won't absorb any more, but I've found that it's much easier to just place the board in something like a

large sheet cake pan or even a metal roller pan for painting, then pour in a quart or so of vegetable cooking oil and place the whole thing in a low oven for a few hours.

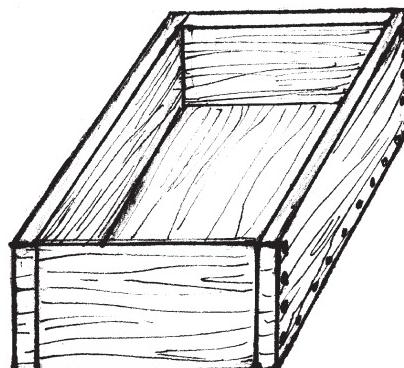
After each session of use, the cutting board should be wiped clean and rinsed well. Then pour boiling water over all its surfaces before putting it away. Add a fresh coat of cooking oil occasionally to keep the cutting board looking nice.

## Dough boxes

With all of the pie crusts, breads, rolls, biscuits, and other baked goods prepared for holiday dining, an old-fashioned wooden dough box is mighty handy for mixing up bread doughs, pie crusts, and other fairly stiff doughs. Usually cherished as a gift, many become family heirlooms.

Again, woods like ash, maple, birch, and beech are preferred, while those like pine and oak should be avoided. Standard 1" lumber (actually  $\frac{3}{4}$ " or  $\frac{7}{8}$ ") is the best material to use. You can simply put the dough box together using screws, or you can get fancy and use dovetail or dowel pin joints if you prefer. An 8"x20"x6" deep dough box seems ideal for most bakers, but they can be made any size that suits individual needs.

Finish the dough box using vegetable oil, in the same manner as the cutting board. To clean the dough box after use, follow the same procedures



*Dough box*

as for the cutting board, but apply a fresh coat of cooking oil after each cleaning. This will go a long way towards preventing the dough from sticking.

In use, if the cooks will always remember to add all of the dry ingredients first, they'll love this mixing box.

## Bread slicers

For many folks (like my family), home-baked breads are more than just a holiday delight. From the first cool evenings of autumn on, they usually become dietary staples. Anyone you know who bakes a lot of bread will appreciate a bread slicer just as much as my wife did when I built one for her.

Use any type of 1" lumber, or even  $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood, to fashion the base and the solid end. I used  $\frac{3}{4}$ " dowels for the upright slicing guides, but you could use anywhere from  $\frac{3}{8}$ " to  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " dowels, depending upon how thick you want the slices to be. Space the dowels so that the blade of your bread knife will slip easily between them.

## Roasting spits

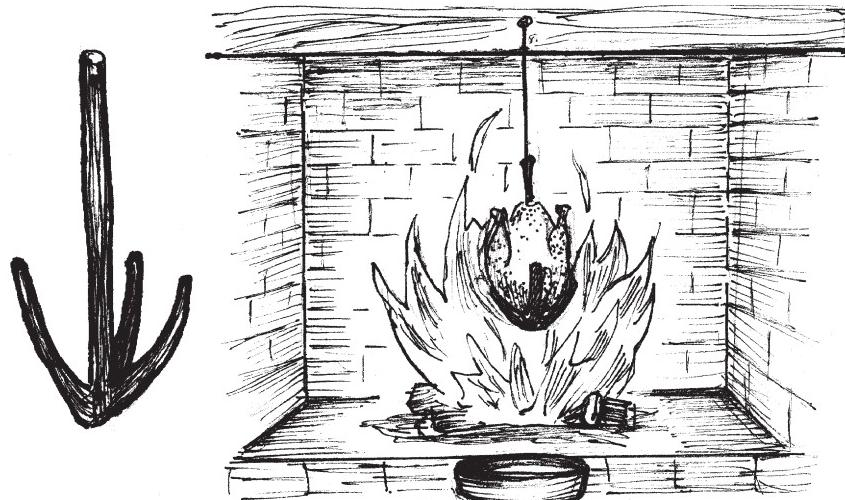
For more adventurous cooks, who also have an open fireplace in their home, a set of dingle spit roasters can make an ideal pre-holiday gift. While these roasting spits are exceedingly simple to make, they also happen to be my favorite method of cooking waterfowl. Try wild duck roasted this way, and you'll probably agree.

All that's needed to put together one of these simple cooking devices is a piece of stout cord, and a "whirl" of branches. Such "whirls," most commonly found on pine trees, are formed where several branches radiate out from the same spot on the trunk.

Trim the stem and the branches to proper lengths (branches about 1" for quail or Cornish hens, 2" to 4" for chickens, 6" to 8" for turkeys), and shave off all of the bark. Drill a hole

in the end of the stem, so you can hang it. Allow the spit to season for at least a few weeks before putting it into use.

To roast meats or fowl, simply insert the spit through the meat and hang it by a cord in front of the fireplace,

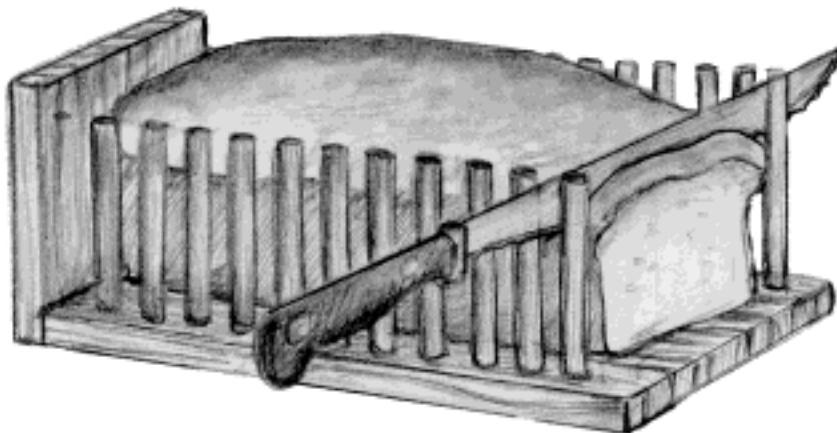


*Roasting spit*

above a pan or other container to catch the drippings. Just give the string a slight twist once in a while, to keep the meat rotating in front of the fire. When roasting wild duck or goose in this fashion, carefully keep ashes and such from falling into the dripping pan: you'll probably want to try these drippings as an ideal shortening for many sorts of baked goods.

a similar-sized metal container. Cut out a couple of plywood disks that fit loosely inside of the can. Drill several small holes through each disk, with a larger hole exactly in the center.

Use a piece of all-thread rod, with a regular nut and a large wing-nut to put it all together. In use, the curds are placed inside of the container, and the wing nut is tightened to apply pressure. Simple enough?



*Bread slicer*

### Cheese presses

Kitchen wizards with a strong do-it-yourself bent will also enjoy this cheese press, which is just as easy to use as it is to make. Remove both ends from a coffee can, a large juice can, or



*Cheese press*

Like I said, these kitchen gadgets are easy to make. Some, like the oven hook, require no more than a few minutes to complete. None of them takes more than a couple of hours to build and finish. Most cooks would be very pleased with any (or all) of these handy kitchen helpers. So why not brighten someone's holiday season? △

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## Close encounters with the white deer

By Marjorie Burris

**M**om! Come quick!" Uncle David called in a loud whisper. "There's a white deer in the meadow!"

I took the griddle off the stove and hurried after Uncle David into the front yard. We could have pancakes any time—but a white deer was something very unusual. Uncle David pointed to the far side of the meadow just above the apple orchard. I could barely make out the deer in the early morning light, but it was white all right, and larger than the gray, long-eared mule deer we usually saw on the ranch.

"Where do you suppose it came from?" Uncle David whispered. "And isn't it beautiful?"

"Do you suppose it is a true albino?" I whispered back. "I wish we could see it up close."

We watched intently. The deer must have felt us, because it raised its head and sniffed the air, then bounced slowly away into the pine trees.

We were both excited. Uncle David looked "albino" up in the encyclopedia and found that true albino animals were white because they lacked normal pigment, and they had pink eyes and ears. He was eager to see if the deer was a true albino.

We hoped the deer would come back. That evening we got the binoculars and settled down quietly in the front yard to watch for the deer. We shivered with anticipation and kept our pact not to talk. But the deer did not come. We went to bed disappointed.

The next morning, Uncle David shook me awake early. "Let's go see if the deer will come back today," he said, and we hurried out to the front yard just as it was getting light. We hid behind the big juniper tree in the front yard. We didn't have to wait long; the deer came through the trees slowly, looked around cautiously, then walked into the orchard to eat some twigs off the trees.

We studied the deer through the binoculars, and were careful not to look at it too long at a time, so we wouldn't scare it off. We could see the pink of its eyes and ears clearly—and we saw something else, too. We saw bumps at the base of the deer's ears. He was growing antlers! We wondered if they would be white or pink.

After the deer left, Uncle David and I were so thrilled we could talk of



## **A BHM moment**



*Inside the Backwoods Home Magazine bookstore  
in Gold Beach, Oregon.*

nothing else all day long. Every morning we would look for the deer, and every morning it came back. And it started coming every evening, too.

A few days later Doug Vandergon, our forest ranger, drove up to the ranch to see us. He told us he had been seeing an albino deer on the other side of the mesa, and it must have changed grazing grounds and come our way. He also told us that the Goswicks, who had lived at the ranch in the 1940's, had seen a white deer a long time ago, but no one had seen one for about 25 years.

The deer became a regular diner in our meadow, coming both early morning and late evening. Grandpa, Uncle Duane, Uncle Don, and everybody who visited us watched for it. Over the summer, the horns on its head grew into a beautiful four-point rack. They were white with a pink tinge at the base.

When the apples ripened in the fall, we would leave a few on the ground for the deer. A little at a time, we would leave the apples closer to the house. The deer would eat the apples, then graze on grass closer to us. We were not so quiet as we had been when we first saw the deer, yet he did not seem to be afraid of us. He would

come up and eat in the grove across the road from the house, even when we were in the front yard. I wish I could say that he finally came up and ate out of our hands, but that isn't so.

The white deer came to our meadow regularly, both winter and summer, for about three years. We all thought he was very special.

The last time Grandpa and I saw the deer was one Christmas Eve. We were standing on the front porch, looking out toward the orchard. About three inches of snow had fallen during the day, and now, at dusk, the flakes had changed into large lazy fluffs as big as quarters. All the branches of the trees were weighted down with heavy, white snow. Our valley looked like a huge Christmas card. Suddenly, the white deer came walking through the gate at the end of the meadow. Following him, in single file, were six doe, their gray winter coats making a sharp contrast with the white deer and the snow.

Unhurried, unafraid, they started across the meadow. Halfway across, they all stopped and looked up our

## **A BHM Staff Profile: Oliver Del Signore**



Born and raised in a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts, Oliver Del Signore occasionally takes time away from his duties as the Webmaster of *Backwoods Home Magazine*'s popular web site [www.backwoodshome.com](http://www.backwoodshome.com) to write an article or book review for the magazine.

In addition to being a webmaster and writing, his career has included stints as a jewelry salesman, maintenance supervisor, pizza maker, Real Estate broker, carpenter, rental agent, and painter. Currently, when not glued to the keyboard updating BHM's web site, he uses his woodworking skills to build custom tables and cabinets.

Oliver and his wife Martha have two teenage children and the grey hairs to prove it. His hobbies include finding a quiet place to relax for five minutes and thinking up new ways to say no when his kids want to do something stupid. He enjoys good humor, good science fiction, and, at the end of a long hard day, a good cold beer.

way. The white deer held his antlers high, and the doe stood erect, as if in a pose. Grandpa and I hardly dared to breathe; we had never seen such a majestic sight. Then, still in single file, the deer slowly moved away into the forest above grandpa's workshop. It seemed they walked with a purpose.

Spellbound, we watched until the snowflakes covered the deer's tracks. Finally, I turned to Grandpa and whispered, "Do you suppose they are on their way to pull a sleigh tonight?"

Grandpa put his arm around my shoulders and hugged me close. "Who knows?" he said, a twinkle in his eyes. "Who knows?" Δ

# Here are five quick and easy craft projects

By Jan Cook

I've always found that crafts are more fun if they're quick and easy. Here are five that look a lot harder than they are.

## Spruce up a kid's room

### What you'll need:

- Paint
- Wooden furring strips
- Wooden shelf (a few feet shorter than the length of the wall) and hardware to mount it
- One roll of white picket fence border (a bit longer than the wall)
- Hammer and nails
- Two silk vines (as long as the shelf)

Measure and mark three feet down from the ceiling. Draw a line the length of the wall at these marks. Apply masking tape just below the line and paint the area from the line to the ceiling. Paint the furring strips and the shelf the same color.

Install the shelf along the line, centered on the wall (Fig. 1). Fill in the rest of the wall beyond the ends of the shelf, by nailing two furring strips to the studs, one along the line even with the shelving, the other about eight inches above it.



Figure 1

Align the bottom of the fencing starting at the left corner of the wall about six inches below the bottom furring strip. You'll need help for this. As one person stretches the fencing along the wall, the other person nails



Figure 2

the pickets to the furring strips, top and bottom. When you reach the shelf, the fencing will wrap out and around the front of the shelf, and you'll continue nailing (into the shelf now) along the lower line (Fig. 2). Having the pickets nailed into the furring strips (top and bottom) at the ends is important to provide stability, since only the bottoms of the pickets are nailed to the shelf. Weave the vines through the pickets and add furry friends (Fig. 3).



Figure 3

I did this in a kid's room to contain stuffed animals. For a kitchen or guest room, you may want to use a color with less contrast, such as pale yellow on a white wall, and put potted plants on the shelf in place of the animals. White felt or painted clouds add to the garden effect.

## Christmas angels

Once you get all your supplies organized (a very difficult task for me),

this project takes about 15 minutes. I prefer the ivory lace, but I've made these in pale blue, pure white, and peach. A good source for inexpensive lace is your local thrift store. I bought a wedding dress recently that only had a small red stain (pasta sauce) on the bodice for only \$7.50. I got several yards of usable satin and lace from the skirt for many dollars less than I could have bought it in a fabric store.

### What you'll need:

- White muslin, cut in a 12-inch circle
- Batting
- White lace
- Three-inch, wire edged, gold ribbon or paper twist
- Flexible gold trim
- Glue gun

Place a wad of batting in the center of the muslin circle. Close the fabric around it and stitch through (or secure with yarn or a rubber band) to form the head. Wrap the lace trim around the neck to make the body. Cut a length (18-24 inches) of the flexible gold trim. Tie a knot in the center; this will form the hanging loop. Cut a 12-14 inch length of the ribbon or paper twist. Overlap the ends, and pinch in the center to make a bow (Fig. 4). Keeping the hanging loop and bow (these will form the wings) in



Figure 4

the center back, tie the ends of the flexible gold trim around the angel's neck and tie into a bow (Fig. 5) to secure the lace wrap. Shape the wire-edged ribbon into wings.

To make the halo, use the same flexible gold trim and wrap twice around a small bottle or bottle cap (approximately 1 to 1½ inches diameter). Apply hot glue to the trim to keep it in this shape, being careful not to get it on the form itself, or you won't be able to get it off. Place the halo on the angel's head and secure with hot glue



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

(Fig. 6). Figure 7 shows a basket of angels using iridescent twist ties for wings.

## Painting with vegetables

You've heard of potato printing, where you carve a design in a potato, dip it in paint, and stamp it on paper or fabric. Well, this is much easier and a lot more fun. Finally, kids can make gifts for their parents that they'll actually use.

### What you'll need:

- Celery
- Green pepper
- Fabric paint: yellow, pink, lavender, white, etc.
- Black paint or permanent laundry marker for outlines
- Solid color place mats and/or T-shirt with shirt board
- Rubber bands

If your place mats or shirt are new, wash and dry them first to remove any sizing.

Cut the celery in half and secure both pieces tightly with rubber bands. Slice off just the tips of both ends of the green pepper. These will form large and small flowers for the place mats.

Make sure you use fabric paint or add fabric medium if you use acrylic paints, to maintain flexibility. Acrylic paint used without fabric medium will be very stiff and uncomfortable.

Put dabs of paint on a paper plate to dip the vegetables in. Make sure all cut surfaces are thoroughly covered with the paint and blot excess on a paper towel. Press celery (or pepper) firmly on fabric (Fig. 8). Repeat as necessary to complete your design. Don't be afraid to mix colors. You can add glitter, too. Allow to dry. Figure 9 shows placemats painted with green pepper flowers.

Use black paint or permanent laundry marker to outline or emphasize flower petals (Fig. 10). Draw or paint on some leaves if you like. I tried using real leaves on my test project,



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

but they don't work well. Veggies with hard edges turn out much better.

Always heat-set painted fabric by putting the items in a hot dryer for 10-15 minutes, or use a pressing cloth and press with a medium-hot iron. Avoid washing the project for 72 hours.

## An easy bean-bag toss

I came up with this not-so-original idea for this game when I realized we hadn't planned any for my granddaughter's birthday party. I taped a couple of boxes together, cut a few holes, and whipped up some bean bags. The kids loved it and played with it for days afterward until it fell apart after getting rained on. For a longer-lasting toy, try making this out of plywood. Since this article deals with making things quickly and easily,



Figure 11

these directions are for the cardboard version.

#### What you'll need:

- Two good-sized cardboard boxes
- Duct tape
- Paint
- Knife
- Old socks
- Beans

Tape the boxes together to make a big target. Paint the outside. In Figure 11, Kevin and Ian are using the leftover turquoise from the kid's room project, but any color will do. Cut holes and paint around them in a contrasting color. I've used both faces and simple lines. Assign values if you like. The large holes are easier to score and should have a smaller value than the smaller holes.

Elissa holds a bean bag made with beans knotted into one of her stray socks (Fig. 12). Easy to make, and



Figure 12

easy to replace. But remember, if these bean bags get left out in the rain, they'll sprout!

#### Re-usable gift bag

I know, I know, all gift bags are re-usable, but the paper ones deteriorate quickly and are ridiculously expensive. What makes this cloth gift bag unique is its matching tag. This bag is 12x18, but you can make them in all sizes. Carry some in your purse when you go shopping, and you'll have your gift wrapped in less time than it takes the salesperson to ring it up.

#### What you'll need:

- Fabric
- Ribbon
- Lightweight paper plate
- Heat n' bond or similar bonding material
- Sewing machine
- Tissue paper

Cut a strip of fabric to the size you want. This one is 12x36. Match the short ends and sew the long sides together (right sides together) (Fig. 13). Turn the open edge over to form a hem and pin in place. In the center front of the hem, mark locations for two buttonholes about  $\frac{1}{2}$ " to 1" apart. Make sure you only make them in the front of the hem area and not through both layers of fabric. The pull-tie ribbon will be run through here. Plastic paint can also be used in place of stitching around the buttonhole. Sew the hem in place. Insert the ribbon through one buttonhole, through the hem, and out the other buttonhole.

To make the tag, cut a square from a lightweight paper plate. Fold the paper in half to make a sharp crease before you bond it to the fabric, so it will open and close easily. Cut a square of heat n' bond the same size as the paper. Cut a piece of the fabric a little larger. With your iron, bond the pieces together as shown in Figure 14. Punch a hole in the corner of the folded edge and attach to the ribbon. Add the gift

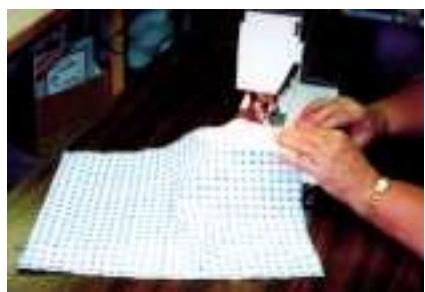


Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

and the tissue paper, and you're done (Fig. 15).  $\Delta$

*I shall tell you a great secret, my friend. Do not wait for the last judgment. It takes place every day.*

Albert Camus  
1913-1960

# I heat my house by burning corn

By Judith W. Monroe

**A**s I write this, it is fall in New England. If you burn wood, you are probably well along with the annual chores of chopping, splitting, and stacking. Back in the spring, you had your chimney cleaned of creosote buildup (or if you have no fear of heights, you climbed up on the roof to do the job yourself). Around that time, you might have walked the woodlot picking the right trees to drop for your next year's winter wood supply, and then the song of the chain saw was heard in the land. In the absence of a woodlot, you consulted the newspaper or a wood-burning neighbor to find seasoned firewood for sale at the best price. Any woodstove owner knows this routine well. It seems a fair exchange for the fire that warms your home during the coldest, darkest months of winter.

Or is it? Even you, who secretly believe your stove is the best woodburner of them all, have occasional misgivings. There was that October two years ago when an early sleet storm froze the uncovered woodpile into one great ice cube. How long was it before you could get to that wood? Or the cold night in February when the green logs bubbled and steamed inside the firebox, giving off the meager warmth of a lighted match. The farmer who delivered your wood swore that it had been drying at least two years. It seems he meant two months. And what about the worst scenario: that time when black ooze spilled down along the chimney, a warning of an impending fire. You've

only had that kind of creosote buildup once, but it gave you chills no fire can warm.

With all your reservations, you have remained loyal to wood heat. After all, the other options do not stand up in comparison. Electric heat is incredibly expensive, and oil is not far behind. Natural gas would be nice, but it is not piped in to where you live, and bottled gas is more expensive than wood. A kerosene space heater that warms only its immediate area is not a consideration. You continue to stoke up the fire.



Still, thoughts rankle. There is the interminable nuisance of cleaning out the ashes. For every bucket that is carried outside, a fine dust remains in the air and on surfaces inside the house. Spiders build slovenly webs that capture this dust, giving certain corners in the living room an Addams Family look. Far more unsettling is the fact

that any friend or relative who has emphysema, allergies, or asthma does not feel totally comfortable visiting in your home for any length of time.

Less vital, yet still annoying, are the problems of dry air and static electricity. No amount of boiling water on top of the stove brings the humidity up to a healthy 30-40%. Your skin is constantly dry. Some of your furniture shows signs of coming unglued. The dining room table wobbles dangerously. If you own a computer, you must remind yourself to touch the anti-static pad before you put your hands on the keyboard. To forget could mean wiping out the memory.

## Heating with corn

For all of these grievances, big and small, there is apparently no ready answer. Until now. In the past ten years, there has been a revival of a heating method so obviously efficient that it is remarkable how few people know of it: using corn for fuel. A corn stove does not burn stalks or left-over cobs. It burns kernels, less than a handful at a time. No, the corn doesn't snap, crackle, or pop. (One of the things people ask is whether the corn pops as it burns.) Corn contains oil and ethanol, which burn cleaner than other fuels, and more cheaply, too. Once you learn how valuable this reasonably priced source of fuel is, you have to wonder why someone in the government has not caught on to the idea of using corn for more of America's energy needs. Given the current political climate in DC, maybe you don't wonder at all (but more about that later).

Corn stoves have been used in the South and Southwest since 1969, when the stove was invented by Carroll Buckner of Arden, NC. The most famous demonstration of the stove was in the Oval Office, installed during the administration of President Jimmy Carter. Even that, as grand a promotion as one could ask for, was evidently not enough to create a rush of orders nationally.

Here in New England where people are likely to mistrust ideas that come "from away," the corn stove might look to some like a southerner's gimmick to use up waste corn. Northerners might also think that any stove used in the South will not really do the job in their cold climate. They would be wrong about that.

In the last few years, corn stoves have been showing up for demonstration at county fairs all over New England. You might have seen one and passed on by, thinking it was just one more wood stove. The only difference, at first glance, is that the fire burning in the glass window is tiny compared to a wood fire. Small as it is, it is capable of producing 60,000 BTUs or more. A lot of heat.

### **Living with a corn stove**

Pour a 50-pound bag of corn into the hopper, light the fire, and go about your business. Unlike the wood stove, after the initial lighting, you do not have to keep an eye on it, poke it, or refill it every hour or so. It burns for at least 24 hours. After filling the hopper of your corn stove, you can go away overnight in the winter without fear of the pipes freezing. To a person who is accustomed to burning wood, that is a luxury.

No more chopping or splitting. No more stacking. No messy ashes. There is no danger of fire, no smoke, no poisonous effluent released into the air, and a minimal amount

of dust settles inside the house. For every bag of corn you burn there is a small "clinker" left in the stove to poke out to the side of the fire box. Later, when it is cool, you crumble the clinker and add it to your compost or save it to sprinkle it on your lawn in the spring. The corn stove is safe to touch on its exterior surfaces. Only the door and its window would cause a burn if touched.

The corn stove does not have to use air from inside the house for combustion, although frequently it is hooked up to an available chimney. Instead, it can draw air for combustion from outside, thus alleviating the usual dryness that afflicts homes heated with wood.

There is no need to clean the chimney each year. In fact, you do not need a chimney. A corn stove can be situated free standing and without a hearth next to an outside wall. A dryer-like vent is all that is required.

Unless you have a woodlot, corn costs less to burn than all of the other fuels except for natural gas. A renewable resource, corn can be replaced in three months' time. Compare that to 30 years replacement time for trees, and 3000 years for oil, and you have one of America's largest and least expensive resources. Yet corn is actually stockpiled by our government, while it struggles endlessly with the politics and the cost of importing oil from other countries. The search for

more sources of coal, oil, and other fuels here in our own land is conducted at great expense to taxpayers, while corn and ethanol are, for the most part, ignored.

There may be other, more personal reasons why Americans have not yet begun to use corn for heat. New Englanders, for instance, are loyal to what warms their nest. They discuss wood stoves with the same fervor they ordinarily save for their cars and trucks. Models are important. Form and function are fascinating. Economy in terms of cords burned is as important as gas burned in miles per gallon. Although we New Englanders are not pioneers when it comes to trying new-fangled gadgets, we reverted to wood burning quickly enough when oil prices skyrocketed a few years ago. Wood after all is a time-honored fuel.

### **Will corn catch on?**

So when will we catch on to corn? Soon. At least 500 stoves have been purchased each year over the past three winters in Maine and another 700 in New Hampshire. Vermont is the slowest to acknowledge the advantages of corn heat. As the yarn goes, a Vermonter will not buy an item unless it is recommended by a Vermont native, preferably a neighbor or friend who already has one. That makes it a challenging market to break into.

Changing from one source of fuel to another can be expensive. Not everyone can afford to abandon a current source of fuel, even if corn is cheaper and cleaner. (I paid about \$2000 for my corn stove. I've heard there will soon be a model available for half that.) Still, those who are tired of paying high fuel bills owe it to themselves to check on prices and do some figuring:

1. Research into actual heating costs in four north-



eastern U.S. cities found shelled corn fuel to have the lowest cost-per-unit of effective heat over nine other “traditional” heating fuels, from oil to wood pellets. (I got this information from the distributor who sold me my corn stove.)

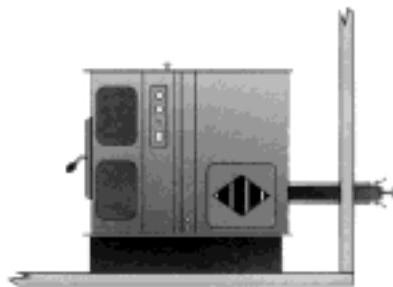
2. It takes 2.2 bushels of corn to produce one million BTUs of heat, at an average cost of \$8.79. Producing that much heat by burning wood costs, on average, \$22.07. (You can use other oil-bearing grains, too.)

3. Heat from wood stoves can't be controlled as well, so there is some waste of heat. Corn stoves are designed to feed the burn unit automatically with the exact amount of fuel required to produce heat at a pre-set temperature. There's no waste. And corn stoves are much more efficient than wood stoves, so you get more heat from the fuel.

## The downside

For those heating with wood, there are two advantages that corn cannot offer. One is radiant heat. I have heated with both wood and corn for years. Members of our family often stand near the woodstove for the comfort it offers (a habit so ingrained that they are apt to do it even in summer, when the fire is not burning). A corn stove, however, does not radiate that kind of immediate warmth. You can't cook on it, either. Although it can be every bit as attractive to look at as a wood stove, it is not hot to the touch, so the heat from within must be forced out by an electric blower.

The second advantage of wood heat is for emergency power outages. A corn stove needs electricity to operate the auger and to blow the heat into the room. When people purchase a corn stove, they often save their old wood stove as a standby for those occasions when the power fails and for the incredible sub-zero nights when extra heat is needed. Corn stove distributors also offer a 24-hour battery backup in



*A corn stove doesn't need a chimney: it's vented through the wall.*

case of outages, but that costs an extra \$300 or more to install, and the battery, of course, has to be re-charged.

If you cherish silence in your home, the hum of the corn stove's motor may be a temporary annoyance. I live in rural Maine, and I had always heated with wood. The mechanical sounds of the corn stove, like the fan on my computer, seemed an intrusion at first. I had forgotten how quickly I became deaf to the sound of furnaces in other houses, as well as the refrigerator and the water heater in my own home.

In addition, like any other appliance or piece of equipment, corn stoves have little idiosyncrasies you learn to live with. You will need to experiment for a few weeks (or longer) to feel comfortable running the stove. Starting up the fire is not that much different from starting a wood stove. You can use paraffin blocks, twigs, or wood chips. Once started, the stove regulates itself. At first, you will need to watch for signs that the corn has actually caught and that the auger is dropping the right amount of corn into the fire box.

With wood, it is a given that there is some dirt and other residue attached to the bark. Corn, on the other hand, should not be dirty. If a piece of stalk, for instance, gets twisted and caught inside the auger, that slows down the fire and can cause the fire to go out. Sometimes there is a buildup of corn in the fire box, and then when more corn drops down, the fire is smoth-

ered. There are similar inconveniences with a wood fire, but on a different scale.

## Use a good grade of corn

Buying corn from a farmer or a feed supply store means insisting on clean, dry fuel. Ask about the grade of corn for sale. The higher the quality of the corn, the hotter it will burn. Any grade corn can be burned, but the corn that supplies the most energy as animal feed also burns the hottest. Most suppliers are beginning to understand that there is a growing market for fuel corn. Those who do are glad to supply clean, high quality corn at a good price.

When thinking of storage for corn, think small. You can store two tons of corn in 50-pound bags in one corner of your garage (about six feet high, six feet wide, and two feet deep). That is the usual amount delivered at one time and is enough to heat your house for two or three months.

The corn stoves of today are much more efficient than the one invented in 1969. Even five years ago there were no thermostats for them. Today, thermostats are an option. Five years ago there were probably only two stove models available. There are at least six now. One early model, the one owned by the author, could be mistaken for a clothes dryer.

Occasionally, because our stove is attached to the chimney, on a day when we turn the corn stove down low, we notice the faint but sweet perfume of cooking corn in the air outside. This is in conspicuous contrast to the smoke billowing from a neighbor's chimney. Our corn stove, homely as it is, has won our allegiance hands down.

(Judith Monroe lives on a Maine mountain at the edge of a 600 acre wood. She buys her corn from a farmer in a nearby town and burns wood from her own land. She writes poetry and fiction, and is the author of two books about life on a Maine island where she lives in the summer.)  $\Delta$

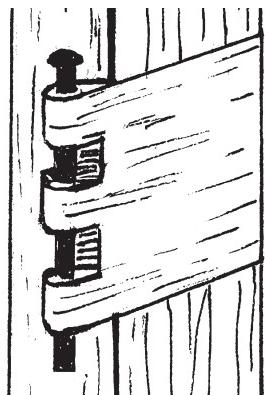
# Save time and money, and get that custom look, with hinges you make yourself

By Rev. J.D. Hooker

**M**any times rural folks get involved in a project that has to be finished right away but find themselves running short of time, money, material, or all three. So they end up with something that's sort of "temporarily" cobbled together. This temporary fix often remains in place until it breaks or falls apart, and needs to be totally redone.

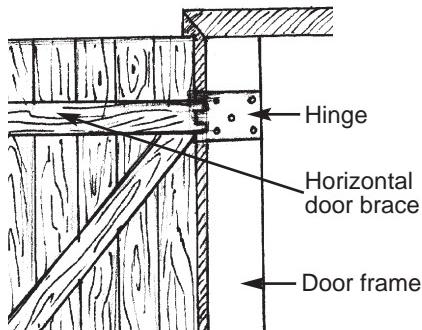
A lot of these times, there really isn't any other alternative, and a little ingenuity and some baling wire can usually fix just about anything. At least temporarily. Believe me, there's a lot of truth to the old saying that "Without American ingenuity, and lots of baling wire, most of the world would starve." Other times, though, especially when it comes to things like simple hardware, it's really not difficult to come up with a reliable and permanent solution.

I realize that lots of simple things, like metal strap hinges, aren't very expensive. Almost everyone can come by the necessary cash to purchase a pair if they're really needed. For a lot



Notch the door frame  
and insert the hinge piece.

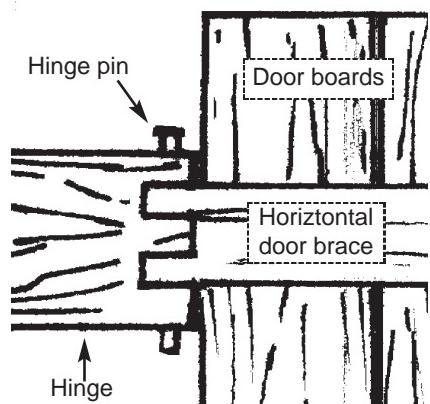
of us, though, it's simply not worth the extra ten bucks in gasoline to run into town for a set of two dollar hinges. Other folks simply can't give up the time for that trip into town, without being forced to postpone completing the project completely. Still others find the clean, simple lines of some kinds of do-it-yourself hardware visually pleasing and its production satisfying.



Wooden hinge shown with door open.  
The hinge is let into the door frame.

Me? I'm one of those people who almost never seems to wind up having time and money both at once. I mean, it's always seemed pretty easy for me to end up with enough of one or the other, but all too rarely both at once. So I've gotten to be pretty good at putting things together while avoiding most of those extra trips to town.

From what I've seen, hinges are one thing where most folks will end up skimping by at first. I've seen a great many gates hung on a couple of loops of rope or wire; pieces of leather, or webbing straps, tacked on to swing chicken coop doors; lids that just sit on top, rather than hinging open; and so forth. I'm sure you have seen many of these and other such jury-rigged "get-bys."



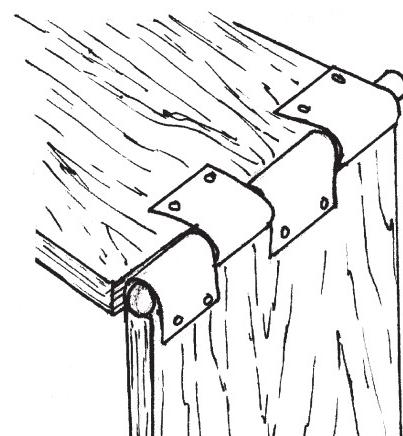
Closeup view of wooden hinge

However, like many other folks, I've found producing strong, not-bad-looking hinges, as needed, to be a pretty quick and easy undertaking. And these home-made hinges often add a nice custom-built look to a project.

## Wooden hinges

My own first experience with making hinges involved building and hanging a Dutch door for an outbuilding. This solution turned out to be so sturdy, simple, and nice looking that with occasional modifications, I've adopted this method as my favorite way of hanging most doors.

Fashioning this type of hinge is simplicity itself, especially if you're putting together one of those simple and quaintly attractive cross-buck doors. Just allow the horizontal wood-



Bent metal hinge

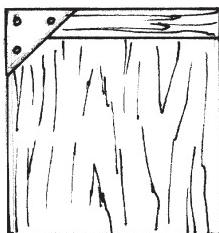
en braces of the door to extend a couple of inches beyond the door's edge on the hinge side. Notch these cross braces as shown. Then cut mating notches in a similar piece of wood to form the other half of the hinge. Fit the hinge together and drill a hole with a diameter equal to half the thickness of the wood through both pieces ( $\frac{3}{4}$ " hole for  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " lumber,  $\frac{3}{8}$ " hole for  $\frac{3}{4}$ " lumber, etc.). Insert a slightly loose-fitting dowel for a trial fit.

Next, use a rasp to round off all the edges, and sort of smooth things up, until the hinge works freely. This usually requires the hinge to be assembled and disassembled through several trial runs, until everything is finally just right. Now you can sand everything smooth and apply your choice of finish. Once the finish has dried, hang your door and step back to admire your ingenious handiwork.

### Gusset hinges

I've found gusset hinges to be handy for smaller items, like woodbox lids, cabinet doors, and chest or tool box lids. It's even easier to make.

Just cut a triangular gusset from metal, hardwood, or plywood, drill three holes, and attach with screws, as shown. That's it, you're done.



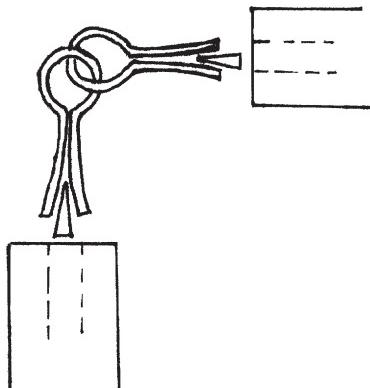
*Gusset hinge*

For lightweight items, gussets cut from galvanized flashing material will work fine. With heavier projects, or where plenty of strength is required, cut the gussets from  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to  $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood, or even from plate steel. I have often used a torch to cut gussets from pieces of broken leaf springs, to use as hinges for larger tool boxes. I'm sure you can think of many other scrap materials that would work as well for your own needs.

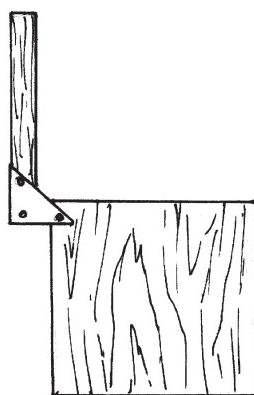
Using this type of hinge, the lid (or door) will swing clear of the box (or cabinet) when opened, and will hold itself open as well. However, this hinge places a limit on how far the lid (or door) can travel. So this type of hinge is terrific for some applications, but not so great for others. It all depends on the requirements of each project.

### Bent metal hinges

With many types of simple projects, like a lid for a rabbit hutch, good looks aren't that important, but reliability is. In these cases I've often found that very simple hinges fashioned from bent pieces of light metal (cut from tin cans, old license plates, or similar scrap), and any sort of wooden or metal rod to be ideal. Simply use tin snips to cut strips of the required size from whatever light-gauge metal you have available. Bend these strips over the rod you'll be using for the hinge pin. Then tack the



*Cotter pin hinge*



*Gusset hinge*

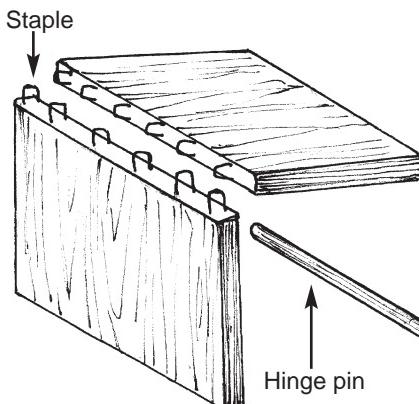
strips in place along the edges of the boards you'll be hinging together, as shown. Shove your hinge pin into place, and you're finished.

Kept painted, as protection from the elements, these simple scrap metal hinges will normally last for many years.

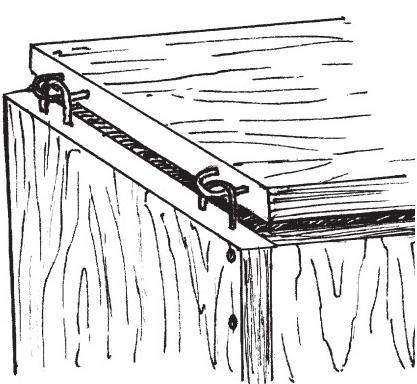
For the same kinds of uses, a row of fence staples can be driven into the edge of each board, with a dowel, long bolt, or other rod pushed into place as a hinge pin. This is another type of "instant hinge" for lighter-duty uses, where good looks aren't overly important. Should you wish to adapt either of these last two hinges for longer term outdoor use, tack a piece of scrap inner tube over the hinged area, to make a fairly watertight joint.

### Temporary hinges

Finally, for applications that are intended for only short-term use, I've got a couple of temporary hinges you might find pretty handy. Both of these cobbled-together hinges were formerly used as hinges on salt box lids, where the corrosive action of the salt would waste away metal hinges. Ready-made hinges were pretty expensive in those times, so these cheap, easily-replaced hinges were popular.



*Staple hinge*



*Double staple hinge*

For the first of these methods, just drive a fence staple into the edge of one piece of wood. Then drive a second staple through that first one into the other piece of wood to form a hinge. Eventually the staples will work loose, or they'll corrode if exposed to wet weather, salt, etc. But for short-term use, they're quick, simple, really inexpensive, and they work well enough.

The second method for fashioning temporary hinges is a variation of this method, but the staples are replaced by cotter pins. Just drill appropriately sized holes in the edges of the boards, link the cotter pins together, and drive them into place. If you place a tiny wooden wedge between the "legs" of each cotter pin before driving them in, they will hold better. Again, these are cheap, quick, and simple, but they're only suitable as temporary solutions.

So, whether you've decided to build a fancy wooden front door for your house, where a finely finished set of hardwood hinges would add that extra something, or you're tacking together a temporary home for a garter snake or other critter that one of your kids is bent on adopting, maybe you'll find one of these simple, home-made hinges to be just what you need. Why not *plan* on using one of these hinges on your next project. It's satisfying to realize that even the hardware resulted from your own skills and efforts. Δ

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# Listening to shortwave radio broadcasts from around the world is informative and fun

By Charles A. Sanders

The voice from the radio was clear, yet was speaking in an unknown language. Tuning in another frequency brought the staccato dits and dashes of a Morse code transmission. A little more tuning brought in an understandable yet noticeably foreign English broadcast.

If you can recall the first shortwave radio broadcast you ever heard, you may remember it as a crackling voice or melody, with the signal fading or growing in strength. The fact that these signals were coming from far around the world was amazing, to say the least.

One does not have to be a *ham*, or amateur radio operator, to enjoy tuning the airwaves. An amateur radio license is required only for transmitting on the air. As a listener, you are free to tune in to your heart's content. Long distance monitoring or "DXing" is not only an interesting pastime, it can be an efficient method of acquiring information not available elsewhere.

Unlike normal AM or FM radio broadcasts, shortwave radio depends upon the atmospheric layers surrounding the earth to "go the distance." These radio waves radiate from their transmission point, then actually "skip" off of the ionosphere, then back to earth to some point far distant from where they originate. The radio signal may actually skip several times before

it loses its strength. This characteristic is what enables you to glimpse life halfway around the world, via your radio.

A good, dependable radio receiver is a definite asset for monitoring these distant broadcasts. For the homesteader, or other remote location, or the casual listener, shortwave radio listening can be a very enjoyable and infor-



mative pastime. During normal times, dozens of entertaining broadcasts may be picked up on just about any evening. In emergencies or during events of international significance, these radios can help the listener monitor important events as they develop, often right where they are occurring in the world.

## What's out there

There are identifiable shortwave broadcast stations in dozens and dozens of countries around the world. Some of the big "powerhouse" stations include broadcasters such as the Voice of America, the BBC World Service, Radio Canada International, Radio Australia, Radio Netherlands,

Swiss Radio International, Deutsche Welle, Radio Moscow International, Radio Japan, Radio South Africa, The Voice of Free China, and many others. One thing you will learn about foreign broadcasts is that not everyone is exactly sympathetic to the United States.

Many religious broadcast networks use the shortwave frequencies. They broadcast their particular messages along with music, commentary, etc., all over the world, and seem to have a very large following. One of the largest and best of these broadcasters is HCJB in Quito, Ecuador. Others include WRNO, WCCR, WYFR Family Radio, and WHRI.

Other broadcasters direct their programming to "patriotic" groups and individuals. There are programs describing how to deal with the predicted economic collapse, how to buy gold and silver, acquiring various items for a survivalist's stores, and other subjects. Their news coverage and commentary convey a noticeably "conservative" stance. On the other hand, at least one broadcast station

works to counter these with their own "liberal" broadcasts. Even the shortwave frequencies are not without some controversy and name-calling.

Scheduled broadcasts in English are made from almost every international station. Broadcast schedules can be obtained from most of the international stations, particularly the larger ones. Most of these broadcasters include their mailing addresses in their programming. Some stations even offer on-air language instruction as a part of their programming.

As I mentioned, it is possible to listen to events of international importance as they develop, from where they develop. For example, back when Operation Desert Storm began, we had two television sets (tuned to two different networks) and our shortwave radio turned on. The shortwave was tuned to the British Broadcasting Company (BBC). After a while, we pretty well abandoned the network TV coverage in favor of the more complete shortwave coverage.

## Universal Coordinated Time

One thing which you will quickly learn is that shortwave programming is set up on Universal Coordinated Time (UCT). UCT is the time at the *zero or reference meridian* on the globe. UCT was formerly referred to as "Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)." GMT refers to the fact that the reference meridian passes through Greenwich, England.

Time changes one hour with each change of 15° in longitude. EST, CST, MST, and PST are 5, 6, 7, and 8 hours "earlier" than the time at the reference meridian. They generally correspond to the 75th, 90th, 105th, and 120th meridians.

The table on this page is useful in computing listening times for shortwave radio broadcasts originating from countries around the world.

## Buying your radio

Now that you've decided that you want to tune in the world, which radio do you want to buy?

A good quality portable radio can do double duty, serving as your AM-FM receiver to receive regular commercial radio broadcasts, as well as picking up shortwave broadcasts. The small portable set which I have does just that. I listen to shortwave broadcasts from around the world in the evening, and the radio wakes me up to the local stereo FM country station in the morning. Select a radio that covers the portion of the radio spectrum in which you are interested. Fortunately, this is not as difficult as it sounds. Most portable DX radios on the market

today include the standard AM-FM broadcast bands. Some may also offer some combination of bands to tune in aircraft, TV, weather, or police.

I recommend picking up a copy of the current [Passport To World Band Radio](#), even prior to purchasing your radio. Not only will the book provide information on tuning in practically every international shortwave station in the world, it also contains information on most of the popular shortwave receivers available, all "star" rated by the editors. This book helped me to decide on the model which I purchased to replace my old radio. Another attractive feature of this guide is the hour-by-hour guide to what you can find across the bands.

### Converting Universal Coordinated Time (UCT) to US times

EST	UCT	CST	MST	UCT	PST
1900	0000*	1800	1700	0000*	1600
2000	0100	1900	1800	0100	1700
2100	0200	2000	1900	0200	1800
2200	0300	2100	2000	0300	1900
2300	0400	2200	2100	0400	2000
0000*	0500	2300	2200	0500	2100
0100	0600	0000*	2300	0600	2200
0200	0700	0100	0000*	0700	2300
0300	0800	0200	0100	0800	0000*
0400	0900	0300	0200	0900	0100
0500	1000	0400	0300	1000	0200
0600	1100	0500	0400	1100	0300
0700	1200	0600	0500	1200	0400
0800	1300	0700	0600	1300	0500
0900	1400	0800	0700	1400	0600
1000	1500	0900	0800	1500	0700
1100	1600	1000	0900	1600	0800
1200	1700	1100	1000	1700	0900
1300	1800	1200	1100	1800	1000
1400	1900	1300	1200	1900	1100
1500	2000	1400	1300	2000	1200
1600	2100	1500	1400	2100	1300
1700	2200	1600	1500	2200	1400
1800	2300	1700	1600	2300	1500

\* Or 2400. 2400 is associated with the date of the day that is ending, 0000 with the day just beginning.

## *A Backwoods Home Anthology*

Another book which you will find useful is the World Radio & TV Handbook. This guide offers information such as location maps, addresses of many broadcast stations, including standard AM-FM stations. As suggested by the title, it also provides information on television broadcasters throughout the world and satellite broadcasts.

Since most of us are not dripping with money, price will likely be an important factor in selecting your radio. However, quality enters into the equation, too. You do not need to sink a fortune into your new radio, but you will want to stay away from the really cheap ones.

For a world-band receiver, \$50 to \$75 is not going to buy much of a radio. You will be able to pick up most of the big power broadcasters, but anything beyond that will be more difficult and unpredictable. These less expensive radios lack the tuning sensitivity and frequency selectability that higher quality models have.

A decent portable world-band receiver can be purchased for between \$175 and \$400. With the higher prices, you might expect more and better features, and in most cases this is true. The Grundig YB-400 I have costs around \$200 and is doing a very nice job. It has many features of larger and more expensive radios. As I occasionally travel in my work, its compact size permits me to take it along to use for entertainment, information, and wake-up duty.

One feature you should definitely look for in a radio is digital tuning. These sets are much more sensitive and accurate than the older analog or "slide rule" type tuners. It is simply much easier to tune in a station with one of these sets.

Sangean, Sony, Radio Shack, and Grundig are among the more popular manufacturers of compact receivers. They have models for just about any budget.

Drake, Kenwood, JRC, Yaesu, and others offer larger countertop radios

with more features, but these will require a much greater investment. They are equipped with more sensitive tuning, more and better noise filters, and other features which make them attractive to the more serious listener. It is possible to tie up hundreds or even thousands of dollars on one of these sets.

For my money, I selected the Grundig Yachtboy 400. This radio offers standard AM radio, FM stereo, sideband capabilities to better monitor "ham" operators, and good coverage of all of the shortwave bands. It is portable, operable from either batteries or AC/DC, and has an external antenna jack as well as a good telescoping antenna. It includes an ear phone, a padded case, and an external portable reel-type long wire antenna.

### **External antennas**

Speaking of antennas, you should note that in almost every case, shortwave reception will be substantially improved if you can attach an external antenna to your set. The familiar telescoping antennas which are standard equipment on most portable radios will do a very good job, but a simple external antenna can do a lot to improve your reception. The antenna doesn't need to be anything fancy. As long as you have an external antenna jack on your radio, any long length of light wire will serve as your shortwave signal grabber. Merely looping the wire along the baseboard in a room will work. So will running the wire out a window and out to a tree, bush, or post. An outside antenna will usually work a little better in improving reception, due to the fact that you are removing it from the network of electrical devices, wiring, plumbing, and metal structural members which can contribute to signal interference.

A simple way to convince yourself of the value of an external antenna is to tune in a fairly good shortwave station with the external antenna attached. Then unplug the external

antenna, and you will probably hear the radio signal nearly or completely disappear.

There is one thing to remember about using an outside antenna, though. If it is suspended much above the ground, then **be sure to have a lightning arrestor hooked into the antenna** between the antenna and the radio. This simple device will help to prevent electrical disasters.

Regardless of the radio you decide to purchase, you will find a whole new world of music, news, and information waiting right at your fingertips. Those long winter evenings will become a lot more interesting as you sit with a hot cup, tuning the airwaves.

### **Suppliers**

Listed below are a few suppliers of high-quality radios, accessories, guidebooks, and other items of interest to DXers. This is not a complete list by any means, but should get the new listener started.

Gilfer Shortwave  
52 Park Avenue  
Park Ridge, NJ 07656  
Information: 201-391-7887  
Orders: 800-GILFER-1  
Fax: 201-391-7433

ACE Communications  
10707 E. 106th St.  
Fishers, IN 46038  
800-445-7717 (24 hr.)

Electronic Equipment Bank  
323 Mill St.  
Vienna, VA 22130  
Technical information:  
703-938-3350  
Orders: 800-368-3270  
Fax: 703-938-6911

Universal Radio  
6830 Americana Pkwy.  
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068-4113  
Information: 614-866-4267  
Orders: 800-431-3939  
Fax: 614-866-2339 (24 hr.) Δ

# These chocolate treats make great gifts and delicious holiday desserts

By Tanya Kelley

**J**ust in case the world comes to an end, I plan on keeping plenty of chocolate on hand in my food storage. That is, if I can keep out of it. The trouble is, aside from just eating plain chocolate, there are too many delicious ways to use chocolate.

Although I have met *one* person who doesn't like chocolate, it's a pretty safe bet that holiday gifts of chocolate will be a hit. Fortunately they also meet my other requirements for gifts: inexpensive and quick to make. One size fits all, and no one will complain if you give everyone their own box of chocolates. No more struggling to find something for the person who has everything. And best of all, your recipient will need more again next year.

Here are a few of my favorites for gift giving as well as holiday entertaining. The cookies and candies below all keep well and ship well. Packaged in a box, they make a gift that few can resist.

## Dark moons

These buttery cookies will melt in your mouth. Makes three dozen.

1 cup butter (not margarine)
1 cup confectioner's sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla
1½ cup flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
1 cup of rolled oats
1 7-ounce chocolate bar, milk or dark chocolate

Cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Add vanilla and rolled oats. Sift flour and baking soda together and add to mix. Mix thoroughly. Shape dough in a two-inch roll and chill in refrigerator for one hour. Slice in ¼" slices. Bake on an



Chocolate cheesecake



Chocolate raspberry torte

ungreased cookie sheet at 325° for 25 minutes, until the cookies are lightly browned. When the cookies are cool, melt the chocolate until it can be stirred smooth. Dip the side of each cookie in the chocolate, rotating it to make the crescent moon shape.

## Milk chocolate truffles

Use either chocolate chips or chocolate bars for this rich candy. Dark chocolate can be substituted for the outer coating if desired. Makes 15 to 20 candies.

12 ounces milk chocolate (divide in half)

2 tablespoons butter
1/4 cup whipping cream
1 Tablespoon shortening
Sprinkles or finely chopped nuts

Melt half of chocolate and butter until it stirs smoothly. Stir in whipping cream. Refrigerate 30 minutes until stiff enough to form into balls. Freeze balls 30 minutes. Heat shortening, adding remaining chocolate until melted. Using a spoon, dip frozen balls in the melted coating until covered. Place on wax paper. Sprinkle tops with nuts or sprinkles before chocolate hardens. Chill in refrigerator for 10 minutes.

## Turtles

Quick and easy. Makes 30 candies.

4 ounces shelled peanuts (preferably jumbo)  
3-ounce milk chocolate bar  
30 caramel candies

Preheat oven to 300°. Unwrap candies and place on buttered cookie sheet. Place in oven, bake for eight minutes, until caramels are soft but not runny. Push two peanuts in center and five around the outside of the caramel to make legs and head. Let cool. Melt chocolate. Spoon chocolate on top of caramels to make a "shell." Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

## Chocolate caramel

Chewy and chocolatey. Makes 81 candies.

1 cup butter  
2 1/4 cups brown sugar  
pinch of salt  
1 cup light corn syrup  
15 ounces sweetened condensed milk  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1-2 ounces unsweetened chocolate  
(depending on preference)

Butter a 9x9 pan. In a saucepan, melt butter. Stir in sugar, salt, and corn syrup. Slowly stir in the milk. Add chocolate. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until candy thermometer reads 245°, when a small spoonful of the mixture dropped in a glass of cold water will form a firm ball. (Test with fresh water each time.) Cook for 12 to 15 min-



*Dark moons and turtles*

utes. Remove from heat and stir in vanilla. Pour into square pan. When cool, cut into one-inch squares.

The desserts below are perfect for holiday get-togethers. The ingredients might look expensive, but when compared to store-bought confections, you save a bundle. (After all, you don't have the added expense of all the preservatives!)

## Triple chocolate cheesecake

The crust is a little crunchy when cutting, but the rich taste will melt in your mouth. Serves eight.

### Crust

1 1/2 cups crushed Oreo cookies (about 10 cookies)  
1/4 cup butter  
1/2 of a 1 1/2-ounce chocolate bar

Melt butter and chocolate. Stir together until smooth. Mix well with cookie crumbs. Press the mixture on sides and bottom of a nine-inch cake or pie pan. Set aside.

### Filling

2 eggs  
8 ounces softened cream cheese  
1/2 cup sugar  
1/8 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1 1/2 cups sour cream  
3 Tablespoons cocoa

Preheat oven to 375°. Beat all ingredients together until smooth. Pour into crust. Bake for 35 minutes. Chill before



*Truffles and chocolate caramels*

serving. If desired, drizzle top with melted chocolate or any remaining cookie crumbs. Top with whipped cream.

## Raspberry chocolate torte

It only *looks* like you spent days making it! Serves 8 to 12.

### Cake

1 devil's food cake mix  
butter for cake

### Filling

2 cups raspberries or pitted cherries (fresh or frozen)  
2 cups sugar  
1 cup water  
3 cups whipping cream, whipped  
1/2 cup confectioner's sugar  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla  
1 1 1/2-ounce milk chocolate bar, shaved into curls  
(use a potato peeler)  
Maraschino cherries for garnish

Mix cake as directed on box, except replace the oil with the same amount of butter. Bake in a greased (not floured) nine-inch round pan according to directions. Let cool.

Mix sugar and water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil and add fruit. Boil for three minutes. If using raspberries, you might want to strain the syrup to remove any seeds.

Whip whipping cream on High until stiff. Add sifted confectioner's sugar and vanilla. Mix in.

Cut each cake layer into two layers (see \* below), to make four layers. Place one layer, cut side up, on serving tray. Drizzle one-third of syrup mixture on layer. Spread

one fourth of the whipped cream on top but not on sides. Place next layer of cake, cut side up, on first layer. Repeat topping with syrup and whipping cream with the next two layers. For remaining layer, place cut side down. Top with whipped cream, shaved chocolate, and cherries.

\*A quick and neat way to cut a cake layer is to evenly space four toothpicks around the layer in the middle of the sides. Place a piece of sewing thread around the sides, resting on the toothpicks. Cross the ends of the thread and gently pull. The thread will cut evenly from the sides into the center, splitting the layer in two.

## Tips for cooking with chocolate

Chocolate scorches easily, so heat on a very low heat in a thick-bottomed pan or in the oven at a low temperature.

If microwaving chocolate, stir every 15 seconds until melted. Do not overcook.

Do not let water get in the chocolate. The chocolate will harden into a lumpy mess.

To keep melted chocolate from cooling while working, place the container on a heating pad.

You can use any kind of chocolate bar for the treats above, but I prefer Hershey's or Nestle's.

Any of the recipes above can be made using white chocolate in place of the milk chocolate. Δ

## A country moment



*A serene Copco Lake in northern California.*

# Custom-crafted toiletries make very special gifts

By Joy Lamb

**A**romas and scents wafting from the kitchen during the holidays fill us with nostalgia and hunger and a cozy comfort. Odors emanating from the bathroom usually do not.

Now, don't think of unpleasant odors. Think of luxury and relaxation and exotic places or even why you live in the country. Do you have a smell in mind? Would you like to package the scent and imagery as a gift? How do you wrap up comfort in gift paper with a pretty ribbon on top? One way is to give toilet articles that are personalized. You can make, rather easily and inexpensively, toiletries that convey both luxury and thoughtfulness. Obviously, this is not a panacea, but it is fun and fragrant to make and give aftershave, bath salts, bath oil, cleansing sachets, and essential oils.

Most of these gift products can be made up quickly. The ingredients can often be found already in your home or garden. If you need to purchase ingredients, look in grocery stores, drug stores, health food stores, liquor stores, and bath/aromatherapy shops. The ingredients are all easy to find. Packaging the toilet articles should be just as simple. Buy bottles and jars with interesting shapes and colors, or save food and drink bottles and jars, especially sauce bottles, olive and pickle jars, and vinegar, wine, and beer bottles. Any glass container that you think looks good will most likely work. The most appropriate-sized bottles hold six to ten ounces of liquid. A good jar size is one that holds one to three cups. Clean the container thoroughly and remove any labels. Right after the directions for making each toilet article, there is a discussion of the whats and whys of the ingredients and some packaging ideas. Keep in mind, these gifts should be fun to make and fun to receive.

The ingredients used in these toiletry recipes are basic. But before proceeding further, a caution is necessary.

Therefore, **WARNING: Do not take any of these products internally. Also, if a rash or any undesirable effect occurs, discontinue use immediately.**

We all know that making aftershave takes sophisticated chemistry and that it is full of unpronounceable secret compounds. Well, don't we? After all, we have read the ingredients list on the bottle. But guess what: Aftershave is basically alcohol. Adding astringents or moisturizers makes it...well...comfortable, but is hardly rocket science. Adding a scent makes it smell nice and lets you individualize it for the wearer. The ingredients can all be purchased readily and locally. High tech, chemistry lab equipment is not needed, so get out a glass measuring cup and a plastic stir stick or small spoon. This simple equipment and some very available ingredients plus a pretty bottle to hold the aftershave is all you need to make a delightful gift for a lucky man.

Each of the following recipes makes six to eight ounces of aftershave. The names are whimsical, and you can personalize them just as you can adapt the ingredients to fit the tastes of the wearer. The process for making aftershave is to measure and pour the ingredients into a glass container and mix them up. For instance, using a glass measuring cup, pour into it each ingredient from one of the recipes below. Stir the mixture and then pour it into a glass container for storage and cap or cork it. Then add a label.



## Pirate Aftershave

The rum and citrus scents give it a reckless, Caribbean flair.

1/2 cup vodka
2 Tablespoons rum
3-4 drops oil of bergamot

## Spicy Aftershave

The cinnamon scent is very manly.

1/2 cup 99% isopropyl alcohol  
1/2 cup distilled water  
3-4 drops oil of bergamot  
5-6 drops oil of cinnamon

## At Home Aftershave

Soothing for sensitive skin.

1/4 cup vodka  
1/4 cup witch hazel  
2 Tablespoons distilled water  
1 teaspoon camphor spirit (USP grade)

## Outdoorsman Aftershave

Moisturizing and gentle with a woodsy smell.

1/2 cup 99% isopropyl alcohol  
1/4 cup witch hazel  
2 Tablespoons glycerin  
2 Tablespoons distilled water  
2-3 drops oil of rosemary (or other essential oil)

After trying some of the above recipes, you will probably want to try some other combinations. Go for it.

## About the ingredients

**Alcohol:** Two of the above recipes use vodka and two use isopropyl alcohol. They are interchangeable. Vodka has a nice feel to it but is more expensive. Most people have no problems using isopropyl, but it does make some people dizzy or sick to the stomach. Be sure to use the 99% isopropyl rather than plain rubbing alcohol, which is 70% and too watery. Vodka and rum are found in liquor stores, isopropyl is found in drug stores or cosmetic sections of grocery or variety stores. It is important to use distilled water because it is pure.

**Oil of bergamot** is an essential oil made from the rind of the fruit of a tree (*citrus bergamia*) and is often used in perfumes. The oils of cinnamon and of rosemary are also essential oils. There are lots and lots of essential oils sold in drug stores, health food stores, and bath or aromatherapy shops. Use the ones you like the best. Essential oils have pure and intense scents and are extracted from plant matter. You can make your own. There are directions later in this article.

**Witch hazel** is found in drug stores or cosmetic sections of grocery stores. It is an astringent, so it helps contract the skin's pores. It works nicely as an additive to aftershave because of this and because it freshens the skin and is a mild local anesthetic that soothes minor cuts.

**Glycerin** moisturizes and is a by-product from soap making. This sticky liquid is odorless and thick. It is used in many cosmetics. Buy it at drug stores.

Be sure to label the aftershave. Be imaginative in giving it a name. Then list the ingredients in the order of amount of each used, starting with the largest amount first, just like the purchased stuff. Put the date you made it on the label, too. You can purchase gummy labels to write on or labels that work on computer printers. Another idea is to design your own and tie it around the neck of the bottle.

## For the bath

A bath duo that makes a wonderfully thoughtful gift for either a woman or a man is bath salts and body oil, because the recipient is encouraged to have a relaxing and indulgent time. Besides being easy, inexpensive, and quick to make, these products are *fun* to make. Experiment with color and scents, making them with the recipient in mind.

The easiest way to mix up bath salts is in a one-quart plastic zip-lock bag. Simply place the ingredients in the bag, expel much of the air, zip-lock the bag, and knead it. Knead by rolling and squeezing, much as you would bread dough. It will take a few minutes to completely distribute the contents and color. The bag can be used as the storage container, or you can pour the contents into a jar with a cap. If you don't wish to use a plastic bag, mix up the salts using a bowl and spoon. Be sure the storage container is airtight. The salts can get crusty or even solid if they take on moisture. Luckily, the salts will still dissolve in water.

## Bath salts

2 cups Epsom salts  
1/2 cup baking soda or cornstarch  
scant 1/4 teaspoon essential oil  
food coloring (optional)

Soaking in a warm or hot bath containing Epsom salts is very relaxing. It soothes tired muscles. Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate) can be bought in drug stores and beauty/health care sections of grocery stores. Both baking soda and cornstarch are, among other things, soothing to the skin. They are probably already in your kitchen. Otherwise buy them in the baking section of the grocery store.



Perfume may be used in place of an essential oil. Be creative when matching up the scents and colors. You can mix up one or more batches without the food coloring, then divide it up and make several colors. Layer these colors in a jar for a pleasing visual effect. Do not use more than one scent per package, as you don't know how they will interact. Be sure to label the salts with date and contents and use clever names that indicate the scent. To write directly on the plastic bag, try using a pen that is for labeling freezer packages. It is waterproof and smear-proof. Find it anywhere that sells canning and freezing materials. On the label, include instructions to add a big handful of the bath salts to the bath water as the tub is filling.

You might note that the bath water will be the color of the salts. Keep this in mind when making up the salts. Some people will prefer clear water, which means no added color in the salts. Oil of coconut might be an appropriate scent here. Others will find blue and green relaxing. Pine or lavender essential oils are very nice with these colors. Peppermint scent with red color is invigorating and invokes holiday memories of candy canes. Just hope the user sees the red bath water as funny, not scary.

To make a body oil to go with the bath salts, first find a glass bottle with a cap or cork that holds six to eight ounces of liquid. Recycled sauce bottles with those plastic inserts that allow you to squirt out small amounts work well. The process is simply to combine the oils and, if desired, add a fragrance. Cover the bottle tightly and shake well. That's it.

## Body oil

1/4 cup each of three or four of the following oils: almond, apricot kernel, avocado, canola, coconut, corn, hazelnut, peach kernel, peanut, olive, safflower, sesame, sunflower, walnut, and wheat germ

A very nice combination for people who love the country is almond, sunflower, and walnut oils. Another winner is almond, avocado, peanut, and sesame oils. The oils used to make body oil are cooking oils and are found in grocery stores. A teaspoon of perfume or essential oil to match the bath salts is a nice touch, but this body oil can stand alone.

A fun and useful bath gift for adults or children is cleansing sachets. They are a use-once-and-toss-away sack that can be used for very dirty hands or to clean the entire body in the bath or shower. Personalize them with your own selection of herbs and essential oils. All the equipment needed is a kitchen grater, a measuring cup, and some small bowls for mixing.

## Cleansing sachets

1 bar soap (plain)  
1 1/2 cups oatmeal (regular, not "quick cooking")  
cheesecloth  
cotton string, colored yarn, or colored ribbon (colorfast)

To make these aromatic cleansing sachets, start by cutting the cheesecloth into squares, four inches on a side. If the weave is really loose, double the fabric. The above recipe makes about 45 sacks. Next, grate the bar of soap to make about 1 1/2 cups of flakes. Place soap flakes and oatmeal in a bowl and mix. Divide mixture into three small bowls so that you can add different herbs and scents to each bowl.

### To each bowl add:

3 Tablespoons dried herbs (leaves rather than ground)  
3-4 drops essential oil

After adding the herbs and essential oils, mix the contents of each bowl well. Each bowl will make about 15 sachets. Place one Tablespoon of mixture in the center of a cheese-cloth square. Bring up the corners and twist. Secure tightly with string, yarn, or ribbon. Be creative, using different colors of yarn and ribbon for each scent.

Oatmeal is a cereal that is soothing and cleansing to the skin and can be bought in a grocery store. The herbs can be purchased, or use some you dried yourself. The same for essential oils: make them or buy them. The following are some suggestions for the herbs and oils to use in the cleansing sachets. They are listed along with fanciful names.

**Paul Bunyan Washout:** dried sage leaves and oil of rosemary

**Sweetheart Clean:** dried rosehips and oil of rose

**Christmas Scrub:** dried peppermint leaves and oil of peppermint

**Relax in the Tub:** contents of one bag of chamomile tea and oil of lavender

The above recipes use essential oils. They can be purchased in a variety of places. The biggest selection will be at bath shops, tourist shops, and aromatherapy shops. They are pricey at about \$4-5 for 9-15 ml. This makes them the most expensive item that you need to make toiletries. However, you only need a few drops for each product.

There are two practical alternatives to buying essential oils. One is to use perfume that you already own in place of the oil. The other is to make your own essential oils using plant material from where you live. The following method is ancient and easy to do. It is called *effleurage* and uses sun heat to extract flower aroma. The only equipment you need is a small glass jar that will hold six to eight ounces of liquid, a measuring cup, and a tea strainer. When finished, you will need a tiny bottle with an airtight cap to store your essential oil.

### **Effleurage: making an essential oil**

fragrant fresh flower petals (examples: gardenia, lavender, lilac, pink carnation, and rose)

light vegetable oil (examples: almond oil, very light olive oil, and sunflower oil)

Place flower petals in the small jar. Pour oil over petals to cover them. Place the jar in a sunny place and let stand for 24 hours. Of course, if your sunny place is outside, bring the jar in at night. Strain the oil into the measuring cup, pressing the petals with your fingers to get as much oil out as possible. Discard the used petals. Pour the oil from the measuring cup back into the jar. Place new, fresh flower petals in the jar, using as many as the oil can cover. Place in the sun for another 24 hours. Repeat this process for four or five days, or until you are satisfied with the scent. Each day you will have less and less oil, because it is impossible to get it all out of the petals. When finished, you will have a tiny amount of essential oil, which can be stabilized for storage by adding a few drops of castor oil, glycerin, or a pinch of orris root powder. Orris root powder is found in kitchen or spice shops.

Besides using essential oils in the toiletries described in this article, they can be used as-is. Simply put a drop on the skin and rub it in for an enchanting aroma. Another idea is to put some drops on dried flowers, leaves, or cones. Pine, cinnamon, and wintergreen are wonderful for the holidays.

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### **A BHM Writer's Profile: R.K. Henderson**



Robert Henderson has studied rural history and traditional technologies in many countries. Following several unhealthy years as a public school teacher, he left the ranks of the salaried to become a writer. Today, he specializes in preparing tasty foods from unusual ingredients, and helping others to do the same.

Henderson's articles have appeared in *Backwoods Home* and other magazines. He also writes a column on linguistics, a vestige of an academic past, for Suite 101.com. Henderson's guide to suburban wild edibles and his first full-length book will be published later this year by Chelsea Green.

In addition to food and cooking, Henderson enjoys and writes about amateur radio, social history, and traditional wooden boats. He currently lives with his wife in Canada.

### **A BHM Writer's Profile: Sally Denney**

Sally Denney lives on a 23-acre farm in Warsaw, Indiana. She has been married to her husband, Randy, for 27 years and is the mother of four children and is the grandmother to Skyler James Boruff.

She enjoys living the country life where every day is different and knowledge is gained from the use of your own two hands.



# Protect your land title before you buy

By Don Fallick

**N**o one would buy a car without making sure he had valid title to it, yet many of us are content to spend much more money for land without the same assurance. There are three ways to protect yourself when buying land:

- **you can have the title history researched**
- **you can buy title insurance**
- **you can do a boundary survey**

In some states, one or more of these are required to purchase any land. The rules vary from state to state and according to whether the land is designated as "rural." All three ways make good sense.

## A boundary survey

A boundary survey is conducted by a registered land surveyor. He measures the land itself, marking the corners of the parcel according to the "plat"—an official map registered with the county recorder. His corners should be accurate to within an inch or two, depending on the accuracy of the information he has to work with. A modern survey may not agree with one conducted a hundred years ago, or even thirty. Modern equipment is much more accurate. I have seen houses built right across property lines due to the inaccuracy of a century-old survey.

Surveyors work in pairs and charge by the hour, including travel time. In remote, mountainous terrain, it can take hours just to bring "control" to your land from a known position such as a section corner or survey monument. If you can find out who did the most recent nearby survey, you may save yourself a nice piece of change by hiring the same survey-

or. If there's no control nearby, he will have to set his own work points from a distant monument, survey them, then work from there. He may need to do this anyway, if he can't see all the property corners from known monuments.

Surveyors keep records of their control points, and they can often re-use them. So it's smart to hire one who has control points on or near your land. If you can find the plats for your area, you'll know who surveyed it last. Surveys more than 20 years old may not be too useful. The markers may be impossible to find, or even missing, and the surveyors may have

retired or even died. But you'll have a better chance dealing with someone who has worked in your local area recently. What seems like a simple survey may turn out to be expensive. But not as expensive as neglecting to get it done.

## Boundary disputes

I bought 17 acres of land in Colorado without either a survey or title insurance. My neighbor was a disputatious man who continually threatened to have our boundary surveyed, and warned me that I was going to lose a lot of land when he had

it done. Finally, he hired a surveyor. It turned out that I lost about six feet of my driveway and a corner of my garden, while he lost nearly an acre of land, half his barn and five newly planted fruit trees. Since I had no desire to make him tear down his barn, we eventually agreed to trade. He kept his barn, I kept my driveway, and we stayed out of court.

It could have turned out a lot worse. One man I know recently found out that five square feet of his concrete driveway encroaches on his neighbor's land. The neighbor wants him to relocate his driveway, or buy the five square feet—for \$5000. In another case I know of, a landowner actually started to build on the wrong lot. He eventually had to remove a full basement and restore the land—a very expensive mistake. But the money lost in a land dispute may by the least of your problems.

## A horror story

In the Wasatch Mountains not far from where I live in Utah, there's a beautiful, two-story, log home on a hand-built, stone foundation.



The owner, a retired well-driller, just discovered he doesn't own the land it's sitting on—or any other land, for that matter. I've changed the names, as the case is still in litigation, but the story goes like this: John Doe and his three partners bought five parcels of remote land, intending to sell off the fifth parcel to pay for a community well and water system. When Doe met George Smith, the retired well-driller, he offered to trade him the fifth parcel in return for drilling the well and installing the water system. Smith drilled the well, then exchanged it and the system for a deed to the land, provided by Doe. Smith spent a year building his dream house and moved in.

Meanwhile, the Doe partnership broke up, and the land was sold to Piney Mountain Cooperative. They tried to evict Smith, and the matter landed in court. Doe's ex-partners testified that they knew nothing of his deal with Smith. The judge ruled that Doe had no legal right to convey title, so the sale and Smith's deed were invalid. Smith can try to collect from Doe for his work in drilling the well, but he will have to sue to do it. Piney Mountain is waiting to see if Smith gets enough money from Doe to pay for the land his house occupies. If so, they may sell it to him. Or they may not. Smith dares not spend any more time or money on his house or land until the case is settled. His position could not be more precarious.

## Title insurance

Smith could have avoided some of his problems by securing title insurance when he contracted for the land, but that would only have paid his financial losses. It could not have compensated him for his labor of love in building his dream house. Nor would a land survey have helped, as the parcel boundaries are not in dispute. But a title search by a title company or real estate broker would have turned up the fact that Doe's partners'

names were on the title. Had Smith hired a broker or a real estate lawyer, either should have warned him that a deed without all their signatures might not be valid.

## Brokers and lawyers

A broker is not the same as a real estate agent. Brokers must pass much more stringent tests than agents, but the biggest difference is in their function. An agent's business is to sell land; a broker's is to advise his client. Regardless of who hires him, an agent only gets a commission if a sale is made, so in a sense, an agent is always working for the seller, or at least for the sale. A broker charges a fee and gets paid for his knowledge, not his salesmanship. A real estate lawyer's job is to scrutinize contracts, including deeds, to make sure they are legal and say what you want them to say.

You shop for a broker, real estate lawyer, or surveyor the same way you shop for a doctor, accountant, or any other professional. Check the local Better Business Bureau to make sure there are no complaints, get names of satisfied customers, and ask them about their dealings. Make sure that your broker and surveyor are state certified or licensed, and that your lawyer is qualified in real-estate law. If in doubt, check with your state bar association.

Your broker should know and advise you about easements, rights-of-way, covenants, and restrictions on the land you are considering. A real estate agent may not know these things.

My friend Bruce spent his life's savings on 40 acres in a beautiful, remote area. His real estate agent assured him he could legally build his backwoods dream home there. The agent was right, too. A two-acre outcropping of rock in one corner of the parcel was legal for building, though not at all practical for it. The rest was protected wetlands, with a total building restriction.

## Easements

A broker can tell you what easements apply to a parcel of land, but a surveyor can show you exactly where they are. It may make a difference. I surveyed one parcel for a client who was preparing to purchase it. There was a well on the land, owned by several local land owners in common. The deed specified a 100-foot square easement around the well head, but did not specify the orientation of the square. By orienting it properly, and including the orientation in the deed, the buyer greatly increased the available space in his front yard, which was the only level part of the parcel.

When you make your initial offer to purchase land, it's not a bad idea to make it contingent on the results of a pre-purchase survey. In one such survey, I found that a corner of the cabin being bought was not only off the lot, but it wasn't even in the same section.

But boundaries, buildings, and rights-of-way are not the only things a surveyor can look for. If you suspect problems with drainage, you may wish to include a contingency for a topographic survey. You will certainly need one if you intend to hook up to a sewer, or if you wish to build on a hillside. But you might also need one to put in a leach field for a septic system. The county building inspector can tell you the local requirements.

It can be quite difficult to judge relative elevations by eye. Yet even a difference of half a percent in grade can keep water from flowing properly. When I was young, I hand dug a 500-foot long, two-foot deep irrigation ditch, only to discover that it was sloped the wrong way. By the time I got the ditch deep enough to run water to the garden, it was way too deep to siphon water out of, and I had to build a water-lifting water wheel. But that's another story. △

*The power to tax involves the power to destroy.*

—John Marshall  
1755-1835

# Next year, grow your own holiday turkey

By Darlene Campbell

If you have difficulty finding the size or type of bird you want for your holiday table, consider raising your own next year. Turkeys are fun birds to raise—they seem to have more personality than other birds, even to the point of being somewhat affectionate, at least while you are carrying the feed bucket. A few turkeys will provide feasts all year long.

When we first started out with turkeys, we bought a trio of Broad Breasted Bronzes that were advertised in the classified section of the newspaper. These are the big guys that were originally bred from the wild turkey, so they still possess the wild turkey markings, only they're larger and meatier. You can select from several other varieties such as Bourbon Red, White Holland, Narragansett, Black, Slate, and even a few newer ones, but you may have to order them from a poultry supplier. Watch for ads in magazines like this one for poultry catalogs and then choose from there.

After breeding the Broad Breasted Bronze for several years, we went to the Broad Breasted White for two reasons:

1. We were living in the Arizona desert, and I thought the White would tolerate the heat better. Our Bronze tom got too heavy and died from the 110° heat when he was about two years old.

2. The White turkeys are smaller and better suited to a homestead. After all, who wants to put a dozen or so huge turkeys in the freezer? Small ones are perfect for company dinner all year long, and can be halved and frozen for family use.

## Start with poult

It's always best to start with *poults* (young turkeys), rather than attempt breeding them yourself, because the tom is so large and cumbersome that he has difficulty mating. Most people don't realize that a 20-pound bird purchased in the store may have weighed as much as 40 pounds or more before it was dressed. Today most commercial turkey growers artificially inseminate their hens, but years ago the hen wore a muslin harness on her back to prevent injury during the mating process, and also to give the tom something to grasp. Without a harness, the hen suffers injury during mating. This can be lessened by clipping the tom's toenails and by using a young male that has not gained too much weight. At best, the hen will lose all the feathers on her back, and at worst she will have large lacerations that could become infected. One tom is sufficient for 12 to 15 hens.

Turkeys are seasonal breeders and will begin breeding in the spring when the tom starts his strutting. If the hen is allowed to roam free on the premises, she will choose a secluded spot to lay her eggs, one a day, and then begin sitting on them. If she is confined, provide her with a nest that is two feet square, with enough nesting material so that the eggs can pocket as they pile on one another.

## You'll want to help hatch and raise them

Although provided with natural instincts to hatch and raise her young, the turkey hen is a poor mother, due to the size of her breast and excess weight. If she sets her own eggs, she is capable of breaking them, and when the poult begins to hatch, she may crush them with her weight. Some of the smaller breeds may be more efficient at raising poult.

At first, we removed the eggs from the hen and placed them under a setting hen. This is an excellent method, except that some hens will grow weary of waiting for turkey eggs to hatch. (It takes approximately four weeks for turkey eggs to hatch, compared to three weeks for chicken eggs.) Such a hen may leave the nest, thereby ruining your eggs. A duck's incubation time is more equal to that of a turkey, so a duck would be a good choice.

Another way to hatch turkey eggs is to place them in an incubator, turning them at intervals. This method has a very high rate of success. The temperature of the incubator should be increased each week, starting at 100.5° the first week and increasing one degree per week until the eggs hatch. Follow the directions supplied by the manufacturer of your incubator. Beware of power outages, as a power failure can cause you to lose all your incubating eggs.

Brooding turkey poult is much more difficult than brooding chickens. The poult must be taught to eat. We found the best method for teaching them to eat is to boil some eggs and remove and crumble the yolk. Drop the crumbled egg yolk from your fingers over the feeding dish. As the day-old poult see the yolk fall, they will peck at it and discover the feed in the dish. The egg yolk is also a good source of added protein. You may have to go through the teaching process for several days before the young birds learn to eat on their own. Turkeys are high-protein birds and require a game bird feed. Also give them access to grass and insects.

## Keep them safe

Keep a light burning in a brooder box, the same as for baby chicks. If turkey poult become chilled, they are likely to pile on each other, smothering the ones on the bottom. Be sure to keep them warm with a light bulb or a thermostat-controlled brooder.

Also, be sure the place where you keep them is safely constructed. Don't make the mistake we made with our first hatch. I had constructed a temporary pen on the enclosed back porch of our house. The boards were not nailed in place, just leaning against the wall. One day when the poult were about three weeks old, I let a dog into the house, a good dog who never harmed the birds. I left her and the young birds indoors and drove to town to do some shopping. When I returned, the dog had moved one of the boards, probably to investigate the turkey poult, and the 1x12 boards fell on the young turkeys, killing them all. Because my pen was not safe, this could have happened with children around as well as the dog, so be sure to construct pens that are securely nailed.

After we lost our Bronze tom to the heat, we sold the hens (they were too old to be eaten) and began purchasing White turkey poult from a commercial hatchery. These birds, too, must be taught to eat, but we are always successful with them and dress them at six months of age.

I cut the carcasses in half through the breast with a meat saw and freeze them in two pieces. Each half is a meal for us, and I always keep two whole birds in the freezer for serving on the holidays.

Turkeys are delightful birds that bond to you. Perhaps it's because you must teach them to eat, just as nature intended the hen to do. But don't get *too* attached, or you might forego turkey dinner and decide on weenies for Thanksgiving. △

## Here are 10 ways to beat corrosion in the garage

By Sandy Lindsey

**1** To keep spare nails, screws, and other small parts from rusting, save empty jars of hand or face cream. Not only will the jar help keep the spare parts organized, but the greasy residue in the jar helps prevents rust.

**2** To keep corrosion away from infrequently used tools, coat the tools with a thin layer of oil and wrap them in plastic wrap. Placing carpenter's chalk in a tool box will help absorb moisture and prevent corrosion, too.

**3** Another popular anti-corrosion technique for tools is to store them in a wooden box with camphor and sawdust.

**4** All new tools should be protected with the following anti-rust, anti-corrosion coating:  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup lanolin and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup petroleum jelly. Heat until melted, stir until blended. While the mixture is still warm, paint it on your tools with a cheap paint brush. Allow to dry. You can reheat it in a microwave as needed.

**5** For a quick cleanup of corroded tools and those with surface rust, dip a soap-filled steel wool pad lightly in kerosene and rub with some elbow grease on the offending areas of the tool. Then take a balled-up piece of aluminum foil and rub hard. Wipe off the residue with a paper towel and

apply a fine coating of olive oil. **NOTE: Do not work with kerosene near an open flame.**

**6** Cola and other carbonated sodas poured on a rusted screw or bolt will help loosen it.

**7** To remove corrosion from car battery terminals, mix three parts baking soda to one part water, and apply the paste to the terminals to allow the alkaline baking soda to neutralize the corrosion. **NOTE: Always take precautions when working around battery acid.**

**8** To prevent further corrosion to battery terminals, apply a thin coating of petroleum jelly or silicone dielectric grease.

**9** To prevent a potentially dangerous moisture buildup in stored electronics (cameras, tape recorders, etc.), put some dry rice near them to absorb moisture. Heat the rice in a clean, dry frying pan until it browns. Place the brown rice in a cheesecloth bag to keep the grain from getting into the equipment and harming it. Check the bags frequently and replace as necessary when the rice becomes moist.

**10** To keep spare batteries from becoming corroded, or old before their time, store them in a Zip-lock bag placed inside the refrigerator. △

# Make this classic Shaker-style butcher block

By Dana Martin Batory

**F**or a piece of furniture that is useful and at the same time will add a special touch to a rustic cottage, home-stead, or log cabin, try your hand at building a Shaker-style butcher block.

This project is adapted from a block made at the Shaker community at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, about 1850. The original can be seen at the Shaker Museum in Old Chatham, New York. Made from a sectioned three-foot-diameter sycamore tree, it is a testament to the Shakers' skill at seasoning lumber. Nearly 150 years later, the block shows no sign of checking (cracking).

**Materials:** one block, 21" in diameter and 13" tall; three legs, 2<sup>15/16</sup>" in diameter and 24" long

## Instructions:

Using a chainsaw (or a large one- or two-man crosscut saw) cut a 13" thick section from a sound tree trunk 21" across—sycamore or ash preferably, though other hardwoods will work. These dimensions are approximate, as the block can easi-



*The rough-cut block (ash)*



*The finished butcher block*

ly be made from larger or smaller wood. Mine came from a wind-damaged ash.

If it's from an old trunk, remove all badly weathered wood. Make the cuts as parallel as possible to save work later on. The bark can be peeled off and the exposed wood wire brushed, sand blasted, or sanded with a flexible flap-wheel. I prefer to leave the bark intact for a nice contrast. Even so, all loose bark, mud, stones, etc., must be removed with a stiff brush or a garden hose. I allowed my block to season under cover for over a year. But don't worry about checking, as it doesn't harm the block and only adds to its rustic charm.

Use a belt sander with increasingly finer grits to dress both surfaces as

smooth and level as possible. Select the best side for the top.

Roughly determine the block's center. Using a compass, a trammel point, or simply a pencil tied to a string fastened to a nail driven into the block's center, draw the largest possible circle whose circumference falls within in the block's bark ring. Lay out three 3" diameter holes at 120° intervals whose rims are about 1" in from the bark ring.

I prefer to make the holes with a drill press, but the throat on the average drill press is not deep enough. No elaborate jig is called for. I nailed together an auxiliary table that could be fastened to the drill press table with bolts and tee nuts. A temporary 80° drilling surface can also be made by simply tilting a plywood sheet on cement blocks, a bench top, etc., and securely blocking its bottom edge to prevent kick-out.

Place the block on the table. Rotate the block. Ideally the 3" drill bit should come within about 1/4" of each hole's center mark. If the top and bottom are badly angled, then each hole must be custom-drilled to reach the 3" depth. This can be corrected later on. Run the drill press on



*Layout lines on the block*



*Drilling the block on  
80° auxiliary table*

its slowest speed and back out the bit frequently to clear the hole of chips.

After drilling the holes, sand off all layout lines and varnish the bottom at least twice. Try to keep the varnish out of the sockets.

Prepare leg blanks about 28" long. Any hardwood will work—oak, ash, beech, etc. Turn to the dimensions shown. The legs can be sanded and varnished right on the lathe, but leave at least three inches of the leg's top bare. Glue will not adhere to varnished surfaces.

To determine the legs' correct lengths, simply place a three-foot rule against the hole's bottom and outside



*Measuring for correct  
height and leg length*

edge. Measure up from the ground with another rule. The block should be one or two inches below waist height, so the point where your desired height cuts the rule in the hole gives you the correct leg length. It pays to check each leg separately both for length and fit. It's easier to correct any mistakes at this stage than later on. Mark the legs and their respective sockets to avoid confusion.

Cut the legs to length. Apply glue to the holes and push the legs into place until they bottom out. Turn the block upright so the weight of the block will



*Turned leg (red oak)*

act as a clamp. Wipe off excess glue with a damp cloth. After the glue has set, the leg bottoms can be sanded to bring the top into alignment if needed.

Apply a salad bowl finish such as Behlen's (or a non-toxic varnish) to the block's top and sides, following the instructions that come with the product. Since you're treating end grain, it will take at least three coats to seal the top.

The block is heavy, about 150 pounds. I've found it best to move it "litter fashion" by sliding a couple of stout 2x4s underneath, running a strap clamp or a rope around them and the block, and putting someone else on each end.

The beauty of the project is the fact that the end result does not necessarily depend on the quality of your tools and machinery, but mostly on the effort you wish to put into it.

The block can also be made totally by hand. After the block is cut, it can be smoothed using a jack plane or block plane. The three holes can be

drilled with a brace and bit simply by sighting the angle. Three straight tree limbs can be cut to length and their ends whittled down to fit the holes. △

#### **Home Before Christmas**

*For days before,  
I thought of their surprised looks  
If I crossed the country and appeared  
on their doorsteps.*

*And, for days afterward,  
I thought of what it would be like  
To arrive,  
As if I were a late present,  
When they thought Christmas was  
over.*

*By New Year's Eve I realized  
I'd just spent another Christmas  
Alone.*

**John Earl Silveira  
Ojai, CA**

#### **A Groaner**



*How far can a dog run into the  
woods?*

*Halfway, because then he's run  
out again.*

*The sole end for which mankind  
are warranted, individually or col-  
lectively, in interfering with the lib-  
erty of action of any of their number  
is self-protection.*

**—John Stuart Mill  
1806-1873**

# Seed art — it's fun to collect the seeds and to create these unusual pictures

*By Alice B. Yeager*

*Photographs by James O. Yeager*

**S**eed art is an old craft going back to long, long ago. Where the art of turning seeds into pictures first began is obscured by time, and I doubt that anyone of our day and age could solve the mystery.

However, I know where *I* came into contact with this fascinating craft. I attended a Junto Club meeting one evening when the program centered on crafts, and seed art was one of the crafts. Naturally, being an avid gardener and fascinated by plants, I was a prime candidate to get hooked on seed art.

## You'll find seeds in lots of places

Creating seed pictures is a fun pastime. Anyone can participate, and it can be a year-round hobby. Collect seeds when the weather is good, then create pictures indoors when the

weather takes a downturn. Seed hunting can be fun for the whole family. Select a nice day, see who can find the most varieties of seeds, and highlight the outing with a picnic. Watch how quickly young minds are alerted to different kinds of seeds.

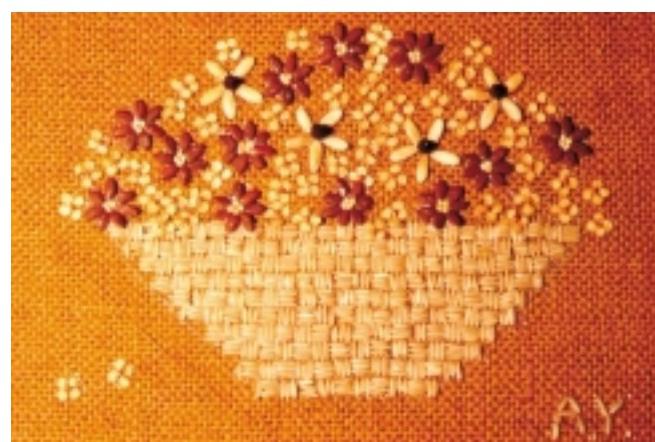
Don't overlook the kitchen spice rack, as seeds are there, too. Saving seeds from your own plants is another way to start your collection. Involvement with seed pictures brings out artistic ability while teaching us about the plant world. And you can make unique and inexpensive gifts.

Remember to spread fresh seeds out on a tray indoors where they can dry thoroughly before being put in containers. Newly gathered seeds may mold if put away too soon.

Seed pictures are not confined to small frames. An example of this is the gigantic display on the outside of the Corn Palace in Mitchell, South Dakota. That large municipal auditorium is redecorated each year with huge amounts of grains and grasses depicting cowboys, buffaloes, Indians, etc.

The theme varies annually. Those murals take a lot of effort and talent, and the end result is not only pleasure for human spectators . . . the bird population is most appreciative, too.

I have seen a few seed pictures of lesser dimensions in museums, but the artists' names are unavailable. I wonder who creat-



*"Basket of Flowers," 8" x 9 1/2"*

*Basket is made of grains of rice in alternating groups to form basket weave pattern. Flowers are made from seeds of mimosa, pepper, mustard, cantaloupe, and four o'clock.*



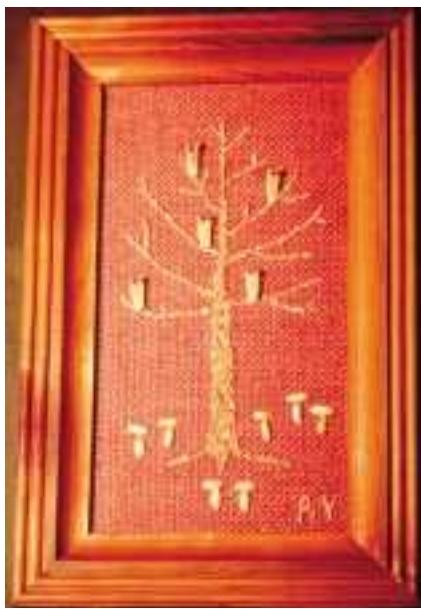
*"The Prairie," 14" x 21 1/2"*

*Flowers are cantaloupe seeds with an althea seed center. Larger flowers are dipper gourd seeds with acorn cap centers. The butterfly is morning glory and marigold seeds. Grasses are wheat and wild oats.*

ed the lovely pictures and how they came by the art form.

Several years ago, when I was one of the judges of a craft show housed in a barn, I discovered someone's masterpiece of corn, sunflower seeds, and lima beans had been the target of hungry rats. Not much left to judge there.

I have learned from experience that destruction can also arrive in very small forms. Tiny seed-hungry bugs can create havoc. It's a good idea to spray seed pictures lightly with a non-oily insecticide every few months. Bugs love to discover a cache of unprotected seeds, so don't forget to protect your supply of seeds, too.

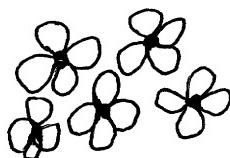


*"Owls and Mushrooms," 5" x 9 1/2"*  
The tree is made of rice. The owls are dipper gourd seeds. Each eye is a pepper seed with a larkspur seed on top. Each mushroom is a horizontal cantaloupe seed over a vertical one.

## Materials

Egg cartons are useful storage containers. Names of seeds may be written on the lids, and the cartons stacked to save space. This is better than using odd-shaped bottles and jars. When my collection reached extensive proportions, I bought an organizer—a small metal cabinet with lots of drawers. Horizontal dividers in the drawers make it possible to keep many varieties of seeds separated.

Burlap is an excellent fabric to use as background for seed art. It is available in several colors and is usually reasonable in price. A yard of burlap



*Small flowers: Pepper with mustard centers*

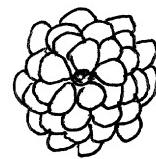
will make a number of pictures, depending on size. Buying half-yard pieces in several colors will provide variety. Not all colors will compliment all seeds. Light-colored seeds such as cucumber and pepper will not show up as well on a beige background as they would on a darker color. Mimosa and apple seeds won't stand out on brown. Light green is a good neutral color.

A lightweight board or a discarded piece of Masonite—something that won't bend—is recommended for a stiff backing. Cardboard is undesirable, as it will soon buckle. If you have a friend who has a woodworking shop, you're in luck, as there are usually scrap pieces of wood lying around that are free for the asking.

## Here's how it's done

I suggest keeping your first picture simple in order to learn the basics. A 3x5" size picture is best for an initial attempt. Be sure that board is clean of all dust, and cut the burlap so that it is slightly larger than the board. Coat the board well with Elmer's Glue-All and place the burlap backing on it, smoothing out any wrinkles and keeping the fibers straight. Let it dry completely, then trim away the overlapping burlap along the edges of the board.

A vase of flowers is an easy subject. Use a piece of chalk or a pastel pencil to lightly outline the vase, keeping it centered and in proportion with your background. (Some folks like to draw a rough sketch on paper as a visual aid.) Seeds suitable for the vase itself include rice, mimosa, cantaloupe, and many others.



*Rose: Pepper with mustard center.  
(Begin on outer edge and work toward center.)*

Apply glue along the top edge of the vase. Touch the end of a toothpick to the glue and use the moistened tip to pick up a seed. Place the seed in the middle of the top line and work toward the left and right until the top line is completed. Repeat for the next line and so on until the vase area is covered, using glue as needed.

Select the highest center point for the flowers and taper downward toward the sides. This is the easiest way to keep the design balanced in appearance. There are lots of "flowers" to choose for your vase. Cucumber seeds make nice daisies. Four o'clock seeds give a cone effect to centers, such as those seen in black-eyed Susans. You can use pepper seeds to make perfect full-blown roses by laying an outer circle andlapping each inward circle until they meet in the middle. Finish with a mustard seed for the center. Four pepper seeds with



*Materials: Seeds, burlap on stiff backing, pastel pencil or chalk for outlining forms, glue, toothpicks (touch glue and pick up seeds), and imagination.*



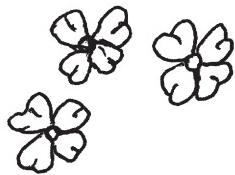
*Owl: Dipper gourd with pepper and larkspur eyes*

tips touching in the middle and a mustard seed for the center will make a four-petaled flower such as a bluet. These are good fillers for blank spaces. Another filler that gives an airy touch is fern made from a double row of dill seeds.

A dipper gourd seed resembles the shape of an owl sitting on a tree limb. To the wide end of the seed add two pepper seeds and a couple of larkspur seeds placed vertically on the pepper seeds, and you have a wide-eyed owl. Make a tree using rice grains and place a few owls on the limbs. Put some mushrooms on the ground simply by using a cantaloupe seed in a vertical position with another on top horizontally. Seeds are versatile. The same dipper gourd seeds may be petals for a large flower, with an inverted acorn cup as the center. Cantaloupe seeds make asters. You are limited only by your imagination.

## Frame it

I consider it a downright waste of time and talent if I don't show off a seed picture masterpiece by giving it a proper frame. I don't use a fancy gilded design, as that type of frame detracts from the picture. A simple hardwood frame is best. I always put



*Small flowers: Grape with millet centers*

## A BHM Writer's Profile: Linda Wallin Smith

Linda Wallin Smith lives in Roundup, Montana, where with her husband she built her own earth bermed, rock and turf-covered roof log home using hand tools and horse power, while living in a tent year-round from 1980 to 1983. She also witched and drilled two water wells, and sews most of her family's clothes.

Linda has sold articles to BHM, Home Power Magazine, and Farm Journal, and is currently working with her husband on a non-fiction book series about some of the numerous miscarriages of the jurisprudence system.



my initials in the bottom right corner of my pictures. That's in case they get past the rats and bugs and end up in museums.

When special gift-giving days roll around, have some seed pictures handy. You'll be surprised how much

people appreciate the extraordinary. You might consider entering some seed pictures in a fair or hobby show. Whatever you do, by all means display your creations in prominent spots in your home. They are great conversation pieces. △

## A country moment



*The Backwoods Home Magazine bookstore in Gold Beach, Oregon*

# Make delicious, eye-catching holiday breads

By Richard Blunt

**B**eginning in early September and lasting through St. Patrick's Day, my mother's kitchen became the neighborhood's weekend community bakery. Our kitchen was not the largest in the housing project nor was it better equipped than many others. But on the weekends when my mother didn't have to work, women from our part of the housing project gathered in our kitchen to drink coffee and tea, munch on a variety of home-baked pastries, and discuss how to prepare each one. Before long the kitchen resembled a busy professional bakery, with women performing various baking procedures while sharing with others some of the ethnic folklore associated with their bakery project for that day.

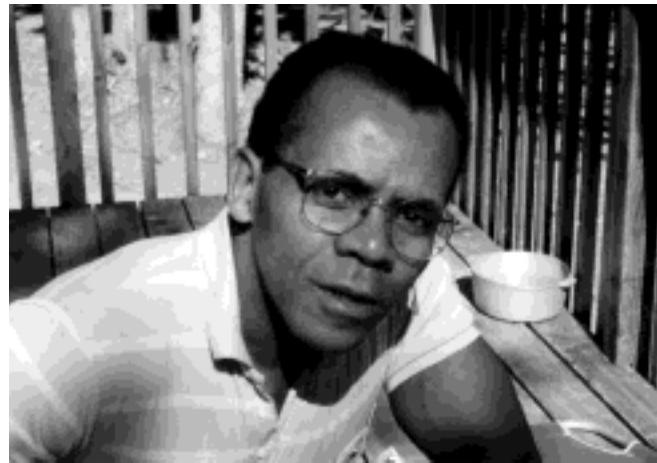
What follows is a composite of 15 years of listening, sampling, and sometimes helping during my Mom's weekend bakery seminars. Throughout this column I have scattered some of the homilies that were exchanged between my Mom and her local bakery group—things said by her generation and countless generations before hers, but which are rarely heard today. Things such as:

*A large hole in a loaf of bread  
is the sign of an open grave.*

An old Hungarian saying claims bread is older than man. This isn't difficult to believe once you realize that the story of bread and bread baking reaches back over 15,000 years into the time when the 100 century reign of the last Ice Age was loosening its grip, and the earth's rock-hard frozen soil began to soften.

In the wake of the receding ice sheets and warming climate conditions, a wide variety of wild grasses and other edible plants began to flourish. The hunter-gatherers of this changing time found the seeds of the grasses to be a valuable food source. Using mortars and mills hollowed out of rock, they crushed the seeds of these grasses and mixed them with water to prepare crude porridge. Crushed nuts and roots were often added to the porridge to make tasty substitutes for the flesh of animals which were dangerous and hard to hunt on the partially frozen wastelands. The wonders of fire made it possible to cook the porridge, first over open fires, and later on hot stones to create the first breads.

These breads were totally flat and unleavened. Leavening wasn't possible anyway, because wild grass seeds were not really suitable to support any leavening action. Their hulls were hard and brittle and had to be parched to separate the germ and bran from the endosperm. This application of heat greatly reduced the effectiveness of the gluten-forming pro-



*Richard Blunt*

teins in the endosperm. A wheat plant with seeds that could be easily husked was necessary if the civilizing of man was to stay on course.

Just how this happened is not clear. One theory suggests that people in the ancient Palestinian city of Jericho, in 10,000 B.C., discovered that a small percentage of the wild wheat plants did not bear the characteristically brittle seeds. These seeds could be husked easily, without the use of heat. It seems as though, in a whimsical way, Nature had created a mutation. After a few accidental sowings by Mother Nature, and some innocent assistance by ancient farmers, a wheat perfect for bread making was born. It was now possible to make a gruel with a high percentage of raw wheat endosperm. The discovery of leavened bread would only be a matter of time.

In Egypt, around 4000 B.C., a small amount of bread dough, left unattended by an unwitting baker, became contaminated by wild yeast and, voila, the long journey to the age of Wonder Bread had begun. The Egyptians quickly made the connection between this activity in bread dough and the fermentation of beer, and by 300 B.C. yeast production was a specialized craft in Egypt. By the 12th century B.C., the Egyptians began to create baking techniques that were both creative and predictable.

*Set your bread to rise with the sun.*

As time passed, baking techniques improved as the result of gradual improvements in the quality of wheat crops and milling practices which produced a finer flour. Each successive civilization left its mark, and Greek bread was better than that of the Egyptians, and Roman bread was far superior to that of the Greeks.

## Agriculture shapes civilization

Agriculture colored the way civilization evolved. Generations of now-nameless men tilled the soil, put seeds in the ground, then watched the birth and death of the new plant that sprung from there. The following year, a new generation reappeared when the fruit of the harvested plant was returned to the soil. Why this should all happen was an ominous mystery to them. As a result, agriculture, and cereal plant domestication in particular, became interwoven with folklore, religion, and mythology, and bread became the supreme symbol of this wondrous relationship. The number of myths, fables, and mysteries relating to breads and cakes exceed all other food forms except salt.

Many early cultures believed that the existence of grain was the result of supernatural forces. The ancient symbolisms and superstitions attached to wheat and other grains by most civilizations center around a group of agrarian deities. The Egyptians believed that Osiris, a god that was cast into the Nile and returned to life, and the god Manerous were responsible for the sprouting of wheat.

The Greeks believed that bread was the gift of Demeter, goddess of the wheat field. Hestia, the Greek goddess of the hearth, who was known as Vesta to the Romans, along with Fornax, strictly a Roman goddess, bore myths that attached symbolisms of fertility and sexual fantasy to cultivation of grains and the act of bread making. Of course these myths start at the first sprouting of the grain and are carried through to the formation of the loaf in the oven.

Chinese emperors of the Chou dynasty were considered ancestors to the celestial deity, Prince Millet, and were regarded as trustees of the agricultural cycle.

Many of the ancient superstitions and myths associated with the cultivation and processing of

***Put a slice of bread and a cup of coffee under the house and ghosts will stay away.***

grains were acted out in rites and rituals that were savage and sinister. In ancient Greece and in the Bible lands, people were burned alive to propitiate the sometimes terrifying agrarian gods and goddesses. Today there still exist remnants of bread folklore that are directly connected to the ancient rites of cannibalism.

To understand this connection, we must realize that the idea of ritualistic cannibalism comes not from the dearth of food, but from the belief that the strength and power of those devoured can be assimilated. In the bizarre ritual of

sin-eating, once practiced in parts of Wales and England, bread was used as a totem object to divest a corpse of any virulent tendencies that might be directed against living relatives. The sin-eater, usually selected from the ranks of the poor, was positioned over the corpse just before burial with a small loaf of bread and a tankard of ale which he or she would consume while hovering over the casket. By doing so, the sin-eaters would take upon themselves the sins of the deceased. This wasn't all bad for the sin-eater as after the ceremony he or she was paid a fee for their services.

***If wheat is cut in the light of the moon,  
the bread will be dark.***

Very few of the ancient rituals—which included everything from animal sacrifices to the burning of children alive—or the breads associated with these rituals, have survived to modern times. But some had their savage and sinis-

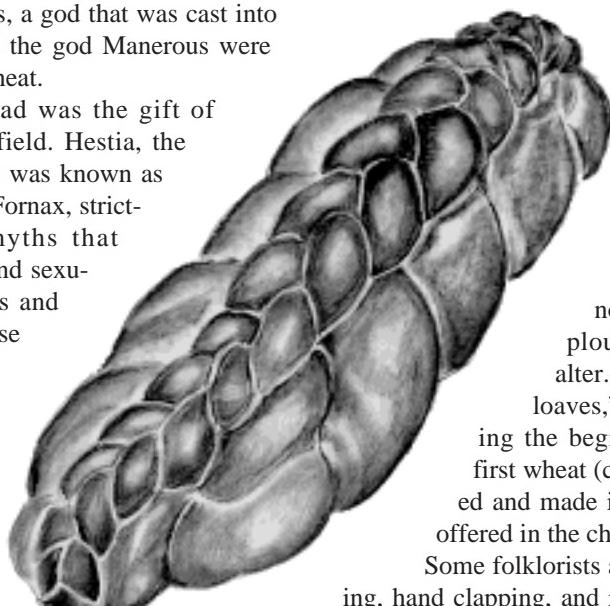
ter genesis removed and were adopted by the emerging Christian churches. Some were given a brighter “fun and games” image to make them suitable in public celebrations. Among them is England’s Plough Monday, which is based on a pre-Christian fertility rite, but is now celebrated on January 6 when ploughs are blessed in front of the alter. Lassas Day, or “offering of the loaves,” is an English festival celebrating the beginning of the harvest where the first wheat (called corn in England) is harvested and made into flour, baked into loaves, and offered in the church to God.

Some folklorists associate many of the foot stamping, hand clapping, and reeling folk dances of the British Isles, Ireland, and much of Northern Europe, to ancient Celtic sacrificial and fertility rites that were themselves associated with the sowing and reaping of grain.

The stories surrounding bread, harvests, and crops go on and on, and vary from culture to culture. They all extol the nutritional or the spiritual significance of bread. In the Bible, Jesus recognized bread as synonymous with nourishment. “Man shall not live by bread alone,” he said. And in declaring, “I am the bread of life,” he metaphorically associated bread with spiritual nourishment.

As we have seen, bread making is an ancient and universal craft that has afforded its practitioners much creative pleasure since neolithic times, while at the same time satisfying their nutritional and spiritual needs.

If you are a veteran home loafer, you already know that holidays are a golden time. They give you the opportunity



to demonstrate your level of perfection in the art while providing you with many hours of creative pleasure.

***“Wherefore do ye spend money on that which is not bread.” The prophet Isaiah***

If you are a newcomer to baking, you must realize that the fancy looking holiday and other festive breads that you see in markets and specialty bakeshops during the upcoming holiday season are not as difficult and complicated to prepare as their appearance may indicate.

To successfully prepare many of these breads all you need is a little time, a work surface, flour, water or other liquid, yeast, salt, and a means for baking the dough. Much of the long-winded technical stuff that you read in some cook books has its place, but bread making is not an exact art, and it is a surprisingly forgiving one. Many ingredients, including flour, salt, and liquid, can be eyeballed rather than measured precisely. I’m not suggesting that you completely ignore the measuring guidelines of a recipe, but scraping a knife across a cup or a measuring spoon to get an exact measure is not necessary.

The recipes I am sharing with you in this issue are all festive breads that were favorites in my Mom’s neighborhood bakery. So relax, make a cup of coffee or tea, and invite a friend over to share in some old time baking fun.

One important thing to remember is that the fancy configurations I’m about to describe will not improve the taste, texture, or aroma of your loaf, but they will impress on your friends the fact that food is better when it’s pleasing to the eye.

## Braids, twists, ladders, etc.

Braiding and twisting adds a professional touch to yeast leavened breads. With a little practice it is possible to combine twists and a variety of braids into one loaf for a spectacular presentation.

Twisting is simple and requires only two 2" ropes of bread dough of equal length. To make the ropes, divide enough

bread dough for one loaf into two pieces and form these pieces into ropes 2" thick. Now, loosely twist the ropes together and tuck the ends under the loaf.

The three rope braid is done using the same technique as braiding hair. Divide enough dough to make one loaf of bread into three equal pieces. Form three 2" thick ropes



*Braiding bread dough*

equal in length, and lay them on your work surface crossed in the middle. This will create a star with six legs, three on each side of the apex, kind of like a giant asterisk. Start on one side and braid the three legs as you would braid hair. Gently turn the loaf around and braid the other side in the same fashion. Pinch the ends together and tuck under the loaf.

Four and five rope braids may sound a little intimidating, but by using the simple formula that I outline here, you will be turning out complex looking braided breads without any headaches, anxiety, tears, or frustration.

### Four rope braid

Divide enough dough to make one loaf of bread into four pieces. Form each of these pieces into ropes of equal length that are about 2" thick. Lay the ropes side by side on your work surface and pinch them together at one end.

***If a man eats the last piece of bread on the plate,  
he must kiss the cook.***

Here is the formula: Starting from the rope on the left, number the ropes 1, 2, 3, and 4. It is important to remember before you start moving the ropes around that the numbers apply to the position that each rope is in, and not to each individual rope. Example: If you move a rope from the number one position to cross the rope in the number four position, that rope is now in number four position and the rope that was in the number four position is now in number three position. If this sounds strange, make a batch of your favorite white bread dough and practice using the steps outlined below. If you are not happy with the formation of your practice braid, you can knead it back into a ball and try it again. If you get tired of trying it, form the dough into standard loaves and bake them as usual. But don’t try to use rope or string for practice because these multiple strand braids need the adherent qualities of bread dough to work properly.

Move each rope in the direction indicated in the box below:

#### Method:

1. Rope 1 over Rope 4 (to the right)
2. Rope 3 over Rope 1 (to the left)
3. Rope 4 over Rope 3 (between Rope 2 and Rope 3)
4. Rope 2 over Rope 4 (to the right)
5. Rope 1 over Rope 2 (between Rope 2 and Rope 3)

After you complete Steps 1 through 5 the first time, finish the braid using only steps 2 through 5 until all of the dough is braided, then pinch the ends and tuck them under the loaf.

***Cut a cross on your dough to make it rise right .***

## Five strand braid

### Method:

1. Rope 2 over Rope 3 (between Rope 3 and Rope 4)
2. Rope 5 over Rope 2 (between Rope 1 and Rope 2)
3. Rope 1 over Rope 3 (between Rope 3 and Rope 4)

Repeat the steps until all of the dough is used. Then pinch the ends and tuck them under the loaf.

1/2 tsp sugar  
 1 pkg active dry yeast  
 1 egg (at room temperature) slightly beaten  
 3 cups all purpose flour (approximately)  
 1/2 tsp Kosher salt  
 1/2 tsp grated lemon peel  
 1/2 cup dried currants  
 1/4 cup chopped mixed candied fruit

## Jacob's Ladder

I use this method more than the other braids because it is quick and easy. The braid forms vertically instead of horizontally and it adds a nice finishing touch to loaves baked in standard bread pans.

### Method:

Divide enough dough to make one loaf of bread into two equal pieces. Form the pieces into ropes of equal length that are about two inches thick. Lay the ropes on your work surface so they intersect at their centers (see drawing). Take the opposite ends of the bottom rope and cross the ends over the center so the ends change places.

Do the same with the other two ropes. Continue alternating the folding of the ropes until all of the dough is used. Pinch the ends and fold under the loaf. Bake the loaf in a bread pan or free form style without a pan.

Now for the recipes.

## Barmbrack

In my old neighborhood the Irish families called this bread Speckle Cake. The Irish moms would start making this bread at least two weeks before Halloween. They would store many of the loaves in my Mom's freezer to hide it from their own kids. If they didn't, there wouldn't be enough to pass out to all of us hungry trick-or-treaters who would start piling up at their doors as soon as the sun went down.

This recipe makes one medium loaf.

### Ingredients:

1/4 cup unsalted butter at room temperature  
 1/4 cup whole milk  
 1/2 cup water



*Jacob's Ladder*

### Method:

1. Heat the butter, milk, and water in a small sauce pan to 115 degrees F, then combine with the sugar and yeast. Stir the mixture to dissolve the yeast. Set the mixture aside and let the yeast proof.

2. Add the beaten egg to the proofed yeast mixture.

3. Combine the yeast mixture with 1 1/2 cups of flour, the salt, and lemon peel and mix with a wooden spoon to combine.

4. Continue to stir in more of the remaining flour 1/4 of a cup at a time, until the dough forms a shaggy mass and pulls away from the sides of the bowl. (This means you may need more or less than the three cups of flour.) Lift the dough from the bowl and place it on a floured work surface.

5. Knead the dough for about 10 minutes or until it becomes smooth and elastic. Place the dough in a greased bowl, cover and set aside until the dough has doubled in bulk.

6. Punch the dough down, remove it from the bowl and knead the fruit into the dough.

7. Shape the dough into a loaf and place it into a standard bread pan. Cover it and set it aside to rise a second time. When the dough is just above the edge of the pan it is ready for the oven.

8. Bake in a preheated 350 degree F oven for about 45 minutes or until the loaf sounds hollow when tapped on top. Remove the loaf from the oven and set on a rack to cool.

## Challah

Challah (hal-la) was as popular in my neighborhood as bagels are in every metropolitan area in America today. Every bakery in the area had its own version. One of my mother's closest friends, Mrs. Sibley, lived in the apartment right below us. When she was expecting guests for dinner on Rosh Hashana or Yom Kippur, she would ask my Mom to help her make her loaves of Challah. She could make the dough from memory, but she had trouble forming the four strand braid or Jacob's ladder fold. When they were finished baking for the day, Mrs. Sibley would ask my mother to join her in the "act of Challah." They would both place a small piece of raw bread on a barbecue stick and burn it over the gas flame of our stove. This was a symbolic reenactment of a woman's creation.

The following is a recipe for three medium loaves.

**Ingredients:**

2 pkg active dry yeast  
1 cup warm water (110 to 115 degrees F)  
2 Tbsp sugar  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup light vegetable oil  
2 eggs, lightly beaten  
4 $\frac{1}{2}$  to 5 cups flour  
1 tsp salt  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup dried currants

There is a glaze that goes with this.

**Ingredients:**

1 egg (beaten slightly)  
2 Tbsp water  
2 Tbsp poppy seeds

**Method:**

1. Combine the yeast, warm water, sugar, and vegetable oil in a bowl. Stir until the yeast is dissolved and set aside until the yeast shows sign of activity.
2. Add the egg to the proofed yeast mixture.
3. Combine the flour and salt. In a large mixing bowl combine 3 cups of the flour/salt mixture with the yeast mixture and mix with a wooden spoon to form a sticky paste, then add the currants. Continue to add flour a little at a time until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl.
4. Turn the dough onto a floured work surface and knead it until it is smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes.
5. Place the dough in a greased bowl, cover it with a clean cloth, and set it aside until it doubles in bulk.
6. Punch the dough down and knead on a floured work surface for 1 minute
7. Follow the instructions for shaping the dough into a Jacobs Ladder or 4 strand braid. When the loaves are formed place them on a well greased baking sheet.
8. Combine the remaining egg with the water and beat briskly with a fork until blended. Brush the egg glaze on the shaped loaf and sprinkle the loaf with poppy seeds.
9. Allow the loaves to proof, uncovered, until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour.
10. Place the loaves into a preheated 375 degree F oven and bake until the loaves are done, about 40 minutes. Remove the loaves from the baking sheet and transfer them to a wire rack to cool.

## **Italian Christmas Bread**

This recipe was prepared by the Italian women in our neighborhood. It's called panettone (pahn-uh-toe-nay). Over the years I have prepared and/or tasted more versions of this classic bread than I can remember. The original recipe is

*A cross cut on top of a loaf, lets the devil out.*

quite involved and takes at least two days to prepare. The following is a recipe that my long time friend Joe Troiano gave me. Joe was born and raised in the south side of Hartford, one of Connecticut's largest Italian neighborhoods, and teaches school there today. This free-form loaf is available year around in Hartford's Italian bakeries, especially at Christmas time.

**Ingredients:**

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup warm milk (110 to 115 degrees F)  
1 pkg active dry yeast  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp brown sugar  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup honey  
4 Tbsp unsalted butter (melted)  
2 eggs (at room temperature)  
2 tsp crushed anise seed  
2 to 3 cups flour  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp kosher salt  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup chopped mixed candied fruit  
1 Tbsp pine nuts  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup golden raisins  
corn meal

**Topping**

1 Tbsp butter

**Method:**

1. Combine the warm milk, yeast, and brown sugar in a mixing bowl. Stir to dissolve the yeast and set it aside to proof.
2. Combine the honey, butter, eggs, and anise seeds in another bowl and beat with a wire whisk or fork until well blended, then add the yeast mixture.
3. Combine 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  cups of flour and the salt. Add the liquid ingredients to the flour and stir to make a soft sticky dough. Add the remaining flour  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup at a time, continue to stir until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl.
4. Place the dough on your floured work surface and knead for 10 minutes or until the dough is smooth. Continue to add flour, while kneading, if the dough shows signs of being sticky.
5. Place the dough in a clean bowl, cover it with a clean cloth and set aside.
6. Mix together the candied fruit, pine nuts, and raisins.
7. Shape the dough into a plump ball and pat down the top slightly to form an oval. Place half of the fruit mixture on top of the dough, fold the dough over and knead the fruit into the dough, then repeat with the rest of the mixture. Continue to knead the dough until the fruits are well distributed.

8. Place the dough in a well greased bowl, cover with a towel, and set aside to double in bulk, about one hour.

9. Remove the towel and punch the dough down. Place the dough on a floured work surface and shape the dough into a plump round ball. Place the loaf on a well greased baking sheet that has been lightly dusted with corn meal. Cover the loaf with a clean light cloth and allow the dough to rise for about 1 to 1½ hours or until double in bulk.

*If all of the bread is eaten at the table  
the next day is sure to be fair.*

10. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.

11. Cut a ½ inch deep cross all the way across the top of the loaf with a razor. Place the loaf in the oven on the middle shelf. Five minutes after the loaf is in the oven drop the final tablespoon of butter on top of the loaf in the middle. Bake for about 40 minutes or until the loaf sounds hollow when tapped on the bottom. Allow loaf to cool completely before slicing.

## **Irish Soda Bread**

This is a bread that was always available in my neighborhood. It was the perfect food for a hard working mom to prepare for her family and could be made in at least a dozen variations that I am aware of. This recipe was given to my Mom by Barbara Sullivan, a neighbor that lived on our floor. She had six children, and the original recipe produced 12 loaves. On St. Patrick's Day she would send a loaf of this bread to my Mom along with a mug of real Guiness Stout.



*Irish Soda Bread with a cross baked into it*

### **Ingredients:**

2½ cups all purpose flour  
½ cup sugar  
1 tsp salt  
½ tsp baking soda  
1¼ tsp baking powder  
1 Tbsp caraway seeds  
4 Tbsp unsalted butter  
½ cup dried currants  
1¼ cup buttermilk  
1 egg (slightly beaten)  
corn meal

There is no substitute for the buttermilk in this recipe. The acid in the buttermilk is critical to the leavening action of the dough. However, you can use powdered buttermilk if you can find it.

### **Ingredients for the topping:**

1 Tbsp sugar  
1 tsp water

### **Method:**

1. Combine the flour, sugar, salt, baking soda, baking powder and caraway seeds in a mixing bowl. Cut in the butter until mixture looks like course meal. Slowly stir in the currants, buttermilk and egg. Mix all the ingredients thoroughly.

2. Scrape the mixture from the bowl onto your floured work surface. Control the stickiness by sprinkling flour on the work surface and rolling the dough in the flour. This dough is not to be kneaded.

3 Shape the dough into a plump ball and place it on a well greased baking sheet that has been lightly sprinkled with corn meal. Pat down the top slightly and with a razor blade cut a ½ inch deep cross on the top.

4. Place the loaf on the middle rack of an oven that has been preheated to 375 degrees F and bake it for about 45 minutes, or until it is browned and has opened dramatically along the cuts.

5. Just before the loaf is ready to be removed from the oven, mix the sugar and water for the topping. As soon as you remove the loaf, brush the bread with this mixture.

6. Remove the finished loaf from the oven and place it on a rack to cool.

There are many variations on the four breads I have just presented, so experiment and personalize these recipes until they're your own. Share with me any variation you create but, in particular, send me recipes for any festive breads you think I might enjoy.

Happy holidays. See you next issue. Δ

## Where I live

*By Annie Duffy*

### Chasing down cows at Jenny Creek

*By Annie Duffy*

A couple of months ago I went on Fall Creek Ranch's last cow chase of the season. Pat Ward, owner of the ranch, her daughter, Stevie Odom, a hired hand named Donnie, and I had to round up about 30 cows at Jenny Creek and move them to a different pasture.

I rode my new horse, Diego, a full blooded black bay Arabian gelding. He looks a lot like Pat's horse, a Peruvian Paso named Nevaro El Prim. We mounted up about 10 a.m.

The dirt road to Jenny Creek was fine until we got to the main hill down to the creek. It was slippery, dusty, and very steep. With every step, more dust flew into the air as the horses slipped. We talked calmly to our horses as if we were reassuring them, but we were really reassuring ourselves. After about 30 yards, our horses got used to the steepness and made it down the rest of the way fine.

In the winter, Jenny Creek is a raging river and impassable, whether by vehicle or horse. The only way to get to the other side is by an old foot bridge that sways back and forth. The first time my father took me on it I was six; I was scared at first, but then I found how exciting it was to rock the bridge back and forth as the creek roared past underneath. Now, however, the water was reasonably shallow and slower moving.

Once across Jenny Creek we followed the road around a bend and went about two miles over rocks, through low-hanging scrub oak trees, and thick bushes searching for the cows. The trail was on an incline that dropped off steeply to our right. Several fallen logs laid across the

path, and we had to ride around them. I didn't see one log until we were right on it, and Diego surprised me by jumping it. Pat, riding just behind me, was surprised too. She said she'd never seen a trail horse fly before.

We finally found the cows at the farthest end of the pasture and saw that one cow was on the wrong side of the fence. Donnie got off his horse and took his wire cutters out of his saddle bag, thinking he would have to cut the fence to get the cow back into the pasture. As Donnie neared the fence, though, the cow panicked and jumped the fence with its front legs tucked under him just like a horse. We were all surprised, and Donnie was relieved he would not have to mend the fence.

Finally we started to move the cows. Included in the bunch were about eight calves and a bull. The bull, although huge, did not look very menacing, but I still kept my eye on him. The ride went fairly smoothly. One

cow and her calf lagged behind and slowed the herd. The calf, looking only a few days old, was almost stepped on several times by Donnie's horse as he tried to hurry them up. A couple of cows tried to go back but were headed off by Pat, who reminded me that if a cow got by you it was okay to swear. Some cows went in the creek and had to be chased back.

We moved most of the cows to the new pasture, but a couple went through the wrong gate, and Pat and Donnie had to chase them down. Stevie and I remained near the pasture gate to block the road so they would go through the gate.

Once the cows were inside the pasture we closed up the gate and rested the horses. I was tired too. We drank from our canteens, and after about a half hour headed back. Ascending the hill from Jenny Creek was even more of a struggle than descending it, because now we were all tired.

But it had been a great day. I patted Diego on the neck, and I meant it when I said, "Good horse!" △



*Pat Ward, left, Stevie Odom, and Annie Duffy prepare for the roundup.*

# This method lets you make quilts that are artistic and very personal

By Carole Perlick

**M**y friend Gladney Weishaupt is a person with artistic flair. She has artistry and drama in her personality, and expressed these qualities for years, painting seascapes with her hands. After many years of enjoyment, she was forced to stop her painting due to lead poisoning acquired through the medium she used. When she was told that she couldn't paint again, she thought that she would go crazy. But as so often happens, when one door closes, another door opens.

During a visit, her niece asked Gladney if she could make a baby quilt to be given as a gift. This was a challenge to Gladney, and it sounded interesting. She took a soft white piece of cotton cloth, approximately 36 by 40 inches, and drew stick figures with

an indelible black ink pen. She then filled in her drawings with bright colors, using acrylic tube paints. Following this process, each drawn figure was quilted around with black embroidery thread. Using quarter-inch batting as filler, the reverse side was finished with printed flannel to ensure warmth. The pieces were sewn together and strips of very fine ribbon were placed at intervals, through the three layers and back again, then knotted. The baby quilt was the hit of the baby shower!

Tasting success, Gladney expanded her vision and began making larger coverlets using designer sheets, embroidering various stitches and patterns that appealed to her.

It took her approximately two months to complete one of these coverlets, which were sold for over \$500.

Outline quilting, not piece quilting, became a major source of expression for Gladney, and the following 15 years were spent making quilts for family and friends. Great nephew

including Mom and Dad, brother, Sadie the dog, and finished it off with other figures that would appeal to a child that age. The quilt became a family project as everyone was allowed to draw whatever they wished on it. Gladney then took over and finished the painting and quilting as needed. The batting was one inch thick, and the backing was done with flannel and bordered with satin bias. Kady enjoys the feel of silk and satin, so this was important to Gladney. It took well over a month to complete this project.

The quilt was admired so much that Gladney went on to make one for her great-granddaughter Jessica and for other grandchildren of friends. At her family's urging, Gladney entered one of these special quilts called "Selena's House" in our local county fair under



Gladney and personalized quilts with her great niece and great nephew, Kady and Jason Lemke. (photo by Frank Tickle)

Jason, who is a normal rough-and-tumble kid, was given a Disney-designed quilt, much to the envy of his sister Kady. When Kady asked where her quilt was, Gladney felt that Kady should have a very personal quilt. It had to be different from her brother's.

Gladney took a piece of soft, white cloth 48 by 56 inches and began by drawing a house in the center of the material. On the house was a sign, "Kady's House." She then drew anything that was important to the child,

Children's Quilts and won second place. The judges wrote about her quilt, "Anyone would enjoy looking at this, but Selena most especially. There is great color, wonderful development of figures and the painting techniques work well."

My personal opinion is that these quilts are not only works of art but the story of a living family. There are a lot of "I Love You's" worked onto the quilt but there is also a lot of "I Love You" in the *making* of the quilt. Δ

# Make your own nifty gift bags

By Darlene Polachic

**W**hy pay big prices for Christmas gift bags when you can make your own for nothing, and use up all those scraps of wallpaper and gift wrap, and even the undamaged portions of last year's extra-nice wrapping paper that you didn't have the heart to part with?

Use the pattern given to create cute little 3" by 4" bags; double the measurements for larger bags; halve them for teeny-tiny bags that make great Christmas tree ornaments.

## Materials

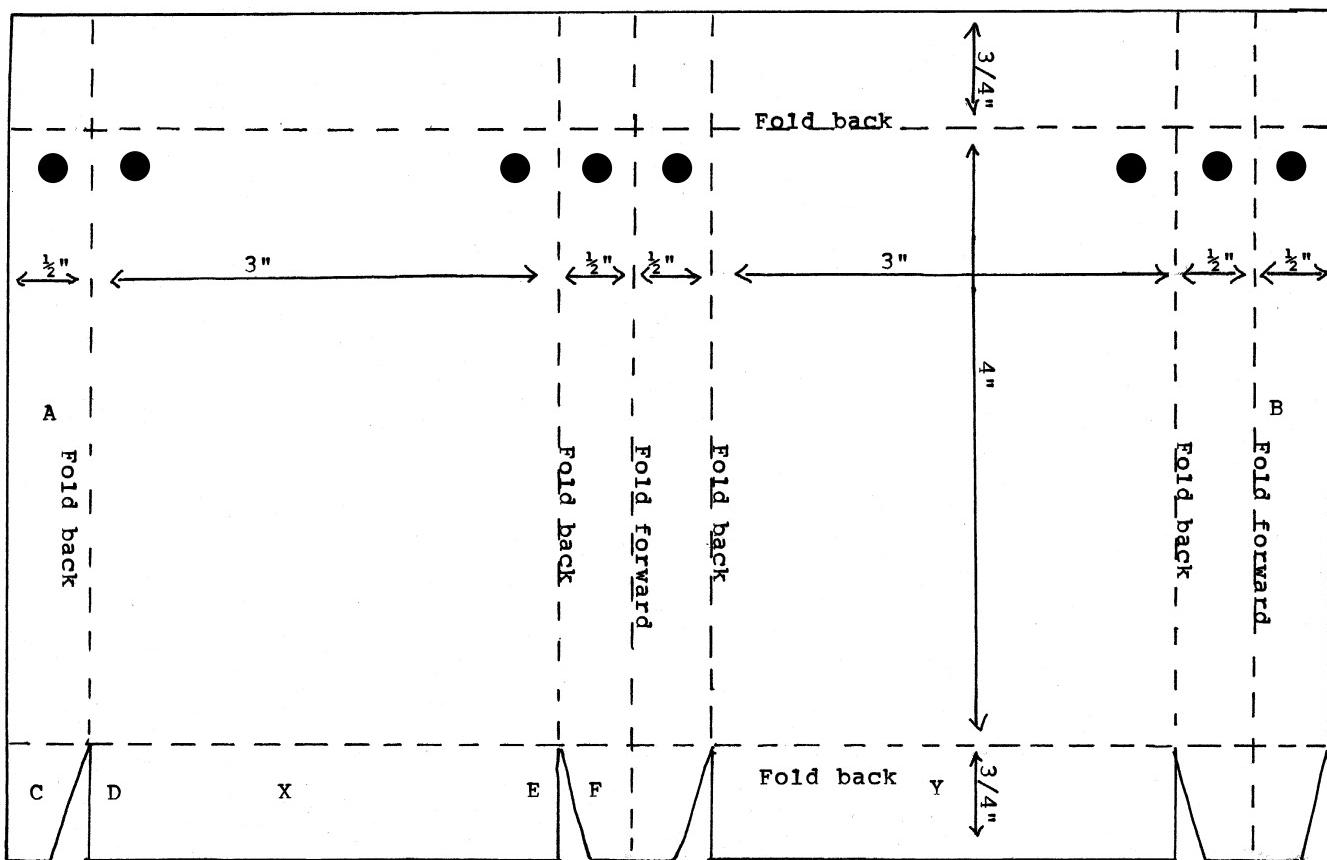
Paper for pattern  
Ruler  
Pencil  
Scissors  
Scraps of wallpaper, gift wrap, etc.  
White glue

### Hole punch

String, yarn, or decorative cord for handles (about 30 cm for small bags)

## Instructions

1. Spread out paper. Press with a warm iron, if necessary, to remove creases.
2. Make a master pattern for the size of bag wanted and fold it as shown along all fold lines, beginning with top and bottom sections. Unfold and trace onto paper being made into a bag.
3. Cut out bag, and using the pattern as a guide, make the necessary folds, again beginning with top and bottom sections.
4. Lap section A over section B, with top cuff of B sliding snugly inside cuff of A. Run a bead of white glue all along underside of section A and press along the length of section B.
5. Fold side flaps at bottom in. Apply a bit of glue to get ready for next step.
6. Run a bead of glue around three sides of section X and press ends to glue to flaps.
7. Run a bead of glue around three sides of section Y and press to section X.
8. Punch holes where indicated through all thicknesses of paper.
9. Thread cord or yarn through holes and tie ends so knot is hidden inside a corner of the bag. Δ



# You can make these beautiful pinecone wreaths at home

By Darlene Polachic



*Glue pinecones to form, beginning with an inside row.*

## Materials

- 14" wire wreath form
- Newspaper
- Black plastic garbage bag
- Hot glue gun
- Pine cones
- 12 to 15 clusters of artificial or dried berries with foliage
- Dried baby's breath or seafoam statice
- Spray shellac
- Masking tape



*When four rows of pinecones have been glued on, the wreath form will be pretty well covered.*

## Instructions

- 1 Crumple newspaper and stuff into back of wire form all around.
- 2 Cut black plastic garbage bag into three-inch-wide strips and wrap snugly around padded form using masking tape to secure ends.
- 3 Sort pinecones into three piles according to size. Beginning with the largest size, glue cones to inside circle of wreath, placing cones close enough so "petals" interlock a little. Place a generous dollop of glue on base of cone and press to plastic, holding cone in place until glue is firm.
- 4 Add a second row of medium-sized cones, fitting as snugly as possible to each other and to the previous row.
- 5 Repeat for third row, then glue large cones around outside edge for a fourth row. The wreath form will be completely hidden.
- 6 Fill any holes with smallest-sized cones.



*Completed wreath embellished with clumps of dried berries and baby's breath*



*Pinecone wreath with dried straw-flowers in place of berry clumps*

**Want to talk to other self-reliant people?**

**Visit the BHM website at:**

**[www.backwoodshome.com](http://www.backwoodshome.com)**

# Use these tips to avoid problems with your sewing machine

By Reuben O. Doyle

There never seems to be enough hours in the day to do all that we have to do. The last thing a sewer needs when she sits down at her sewing machine is to have everything go wrong. The needle breaks, thread jams in the bobbin area or keeps skipping stitches, or there are other frustrating problems that keep the project from being completed. These problems happen to the seasoned pro as well as the novice sewer, and while we would like to blame the sewing machine and perhaps "throw it out the window," there are measures the home sewer can take to correct most problems or even prevent them from happening in the first place. (I service sewing machines, so I know.)

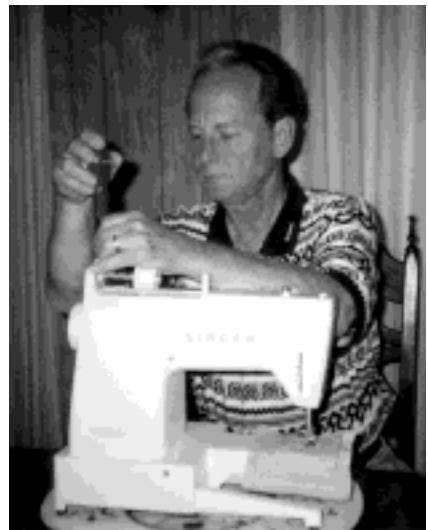
## The needle

The sewing machine needle is probably the number one cause of problems for sewers and crafters. This may sound silly, but the first thing to check when having stitching problems is whether the needle is in backwards. Oh, I know you're saying, "I've been sewing most of my life, and I know how to put the needle in the machine,"

but in about 25% of the sewing machine repair jobs I go out on, the only problem is that the needle was put in backwards. If your machine will not pick up the bottom thread or skips stitches badly, in most cases it's because your needle is in wrong.

Each sewing machine requires that the "flat" side of the needle be put in a specific way, facing the front, the back, etc., depending on your particular machine. Sewers in a hurry to get a project done may simply insert the needle, not pay attention to the position of the flat side, and immediately begin having problems. If by chance you have a sewing machine that takes a needle that doesn't have a flat side, you'll notice that each needle has a groove in it where the thread lies as it penetrates the fabric. Depending on whether your machine shuttle system faces to the front or left, the groove of the needle will also face front or left.

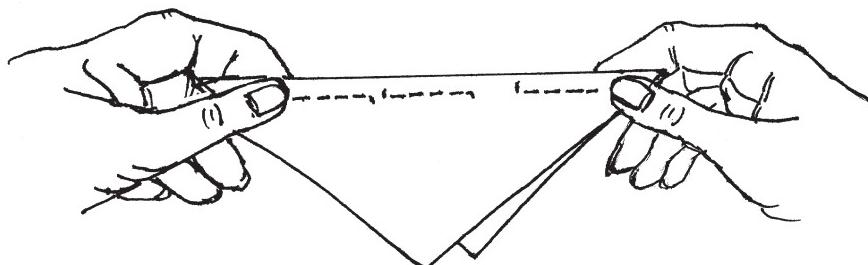
A needle that is dull, bent, or simply the wrong size or type can cause major sewing problems. Just because the needle "looks good" doesn't mean that it is good. A small "snag" on the tip of the needle can cause runs in the fabric, and a needle that is even slightly bent won't sew properly. A good



*The author at work*

rule of thumb would be to change the machine needle before each new project. And because some fabrics and fabric finishes can increase wear on the needle, you may even need to change the needle *during* the project if you notice stitching problems beginning to appear.

Always use the right size needle for the type of fabric you're sewing. I've seen sewers trying to sew denim with a fine lingerie type needle simply "because the needle was in the machine and still a good needle," and others trying to sew fine fabrics with needles that are much too large. A needle too fine for heavy fabric can bend or break when it hits the fabric, while too large a needle for the fabric can make puncture holes in the fabric and cause the thread to pull unevenly while stitching. Do yourself a huge favor and check the machine needle before you begin any new project.



*Testing thread tension*

## The thread

The second thing to check is the thread itself. I have found that "cheap" thread is definitely *not* a bargain. The fibers of cheap thread split easily while you're sewing and can cause knotting or breakage of the thread, and can also cause a build-up of lint in the bobbin area and along the thread line

from the spool to the needle. If you hold a length of cheap thread up to the light, you can see the frayed edges and roughness of the thread. Stick to a good quality thread and you'll minimize the potential problems.

As you change projects and start sewing on different weight materials, you should test stitch on a piece of scrap material of the same weight before beginning the actual project, so you can adjust your upper tension to that particular material. As an example, if you're changing from a denim type material to a silky type material, you would definitely want to make sure the tension is correct and the stitching looks right before you start to sew on the garment.

To determine whether the upper tension is too tight or too loose for the fabric you're wanting to use, try the following test. Take a small scrap of the fabric, fold it, and stitch a line on the *bias* of the fabric (that is, diagonally across the weave), using different colors of thread in the bobbin and on top. Grasp the bias line of stitching between the thumb and index finger. Space the hands about three inches apart and pull with an even, quick force until one thread breaks. If the broken thread is the color of the thread in the needle, it means that the upper tension is too tight. If the broken thread is the color of the bobbin thread, the upper tension is too loose. If both threads break together and take more force to break, it means that the tensions are balanced.

Using different weights of thread on the spool and in the bobbin will cause ragged stitches, as well as other stitching problems. Never mix different sizes of thread in the bobbin and on the spool. (The exception is when you're doing sewing machine embroidery, where you might be using a heavier thread on the top to get a certain effect for the embroidery project).

You should also check to be sure the sewing machine is threaded properly. Each machine has a certain sequence for threading, and it only takes one

missed step in the sequence to cause your machine to skip stitches. If in doubt, take the top thread completely out and start all over again.

Many times it's the small things that cause a lot of frustration and loss of sewing time. Taking just a few minutes before starting a project to make sure everything is in order can avoid hours of "down time," not to mention frayed nerves and the possibility of an unnecessary trip to the repair shop.

(Reuben Doyle has written Sewing Machine Repair For The Home

Sewer (\$17.95 plus \$2 P&H). Write Reuben Doyle, 7267-F Mobile Hwy., Pensacola, FL 32526.)  $\Delta$

## **A country moment**



*A little old house from the past.*

## **A country moment**



*BHM Publisher Dave Duffy and Paul Luckey shovel out a frozen backhoe in the Oregon woods.*

# Delicious holiday cakes don't have to be diet-busters

By Jennifer Stein Barker

**M**ost people just sigh and forget about their diets during the holidays. That's because the main ingredients of most holiday treats are sugar, saturated fat, and eggs with just enough white flour to bind them together. The rationale for eating this stuff is that "it's only once a year." I'm telling you that you don't have to eat this way to feel like the holidays are special.

The principal ingredient of the recipes in this article is whole wheat flour. Its hearty goodness will satisfy your appetite more quickly than white flour and sugar, but you will feel you've eaten something special when you taste the vibrant spices and moist, soft texture of these cakes. They don't really need any dressing up, but for a festive occasion, try frozen yogurt, ice cream, or the honey cream cheese frosting recipe given here.

For a holiday buffet, arrange the pre-cut squares on a doily-lined plate. Don't pre-chill the frosting, but drizzle a little as a glaze over each square; then chill just to set before serving or wrapping up the plate for later use. These cakes go great in lunch boxes, too. Put these tender morsels in rigid snap-lid containers, and be sure to include a fork, as they are too delicate for finger food.

## Gingerbread

A moist, gingery cake that is spiced just right. Use dark, or blackstrap molasses for best flavor. Makes an 8x8" cake.

1 2/3 cups whole wheat pastry flour
1 1/4 teaspoons baking soda
1 1/4 teaspoons ginger
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1/3 cup oil
1/2 cup honey
1/4 cup dark molasses
1 egg
3/4 cup boiling water

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees and lightly oil an 8x8" square cake pan. Sift together the flour, soda, ginger, cinnamon, and cloves into a medium bowl. Spoon the mixture back into the sifter. Measure the oil, honey, and molasses into the bowl. Add the egg. Beat with a mixer until frothy. Sift the dry ingredients into the wet mixture in three parts, beating well after each addition. The batter will get very stiff with the third addition. Add the boiling water, and beat



with a mixer or rotary beater for a full minute. The batter will be thin. Pour the batter into the prepared pan, and bake at 325 degrees for about 45 minutes, until the cake tests done.

## Pineapple-coconut cake

Good when served warm for a treat. Makes a 9x9" cake.

2 cups whole wheat pastry flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon soda
1 Tablespoon buttermilk powder
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1 egg
1/2 cup oil
2/3 cup honey
2/3 cup yogurt
1 cup crushed pineapple
1/2 cup unsweetened flaked coconut
1 Tablespoon lemon juice

Prepare a 9x9" cake pan by oiling it and lining with baker's paper. Preheat the oven to 350°. Sift together the flour, baking powder, soda, buttermilk powder, and nutmeg. In a large bowl, stir together the egg, oil, honey, yogurt, crushed pineapple, coconut, and lemon juice until thoroughly mixed.

Add the dry mixture to the wet mixture in three or four installments, beating with a spoon until well-mixed each time. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan. Bake 30 to 40 minutes, until the cake tests done. Let cool five minutes in pan, then remove from pan and cool on a wire rack. May be served warm or at room temperature.

### Tahini spice cake

A simple spice cake, with a subtle nutty flavor. Makes an 8x8" cake.

1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cups whole wheat pastry flour  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon soda  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg  
1/4 teaspoon cloves  
1/4 cup cocoa powder  
1 egg  
1/4 cup oil  
2/3 cup honey  
1/4 cup tahini  
1/2 cup yogurt  
1/3 cup lukewarm water

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Prepare an 8x8" pan by oiling it lightly. Into a medium bowl, sift the flour, baking powder, soda, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and cocoa powder. Set aside. In another medium bowl, put the egg, oil, honey, tahini, yogurt, and water. Beat until frothy and well-blended. Add the dry ingredients in four parts, beating well after each one until smooth. Scrape the batter into the pan, and bake at 350 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes, until the cake tests done. Remove from pan and cool on a rack.

### Chocolate cake

A great classic chocolate cake: moist, heavy, almost gooey. A cake-and-ice cream cake. Makes an 8x8" cake.



1 cup whole wheat pastry flour  
1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
1/2 teaspoon baking powder  
3/4 teaspoon baking soda  
3 Tablespoons buttermilk powder  
1/4 cup oil  
1/2 cup honey  
1 egg  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
3/4 cup boiling water

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees and prepare an 8x8" pan by oiling it lightly. Set your sifter on a plate. Measure the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, soda, and buttermilk powder into it, and set aside. In a medium bowl, beat the oil, honey, egg, and vanilla together until frothy. Sift in the dry ingredients in three parts, beating each well until blended (be sure to use any bran left in the sifter and any flour that fell on the plate). If you are using a hand beater, you may have to finish this with a spoon. Add the boiling water, and beat for one minute. Batter will be thin. Pour the batter into the prepared pan, and bake at 325 degrees for 30 to 35 minutes, until the cake tests done. Cool in the pan, then cut into squares and remove with a spatula to a rack.

### Honey cream cheese frosting

Use light or natural cream cheese. This is a soft frosting, almost more of a glaze.

5 ounces cream cheese, softened  
3 - 4 Tablespoons honey  
1 Tablespoon dark rum  
-or-  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla

Beat the cream cheese and honey until they are well-blended and creamy. Beat in the rum or vanilla. Refrigerate at least an hour, or until somewhat firm, before frosting the cake. Δ

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## Ayoob on firearms

*By Massad Ayoob*

### The best deal in home-defense guns

**B**ackwoods home folks tend to be practical and economical. In that vein, they'll appreciate the best buy available today: traded-in police service handguns that glut the secondhand firearms market. There are two generations worth, and all are good buys.

Best of all are the "first generation" trade-ins. The majority of the nation's police have swapped their six-shot service revolvers for higher capacity, quickly-reloaded semiautomatics. Far from being worn out, many of these .38 Special and .357 Magnum revolvers were latest generation heavy duty weapons that were nearly new, such as the Smith & Wesson L-frame Model 686 or the Ruger GP-100. Virtually all got routine maintenance from factory-trained department armorers. I know that when my department traded in its .357s for Ruger 45 autos in 1993, a bunch of choice Ruger Security Six and GP-100 revolvers went out to be resold cheap to smart citizens. Some were bought back by our own officers as home defense guns.

Because there are so many of these trade-ins, hundreds of thousands of them, they're available dirt cheap...generally under \$250 and often under \$200 buys an excellent condition used revolver in the same condition as a new one that would sell for over \$450.

The second generation of used guns are the high capacity 9mmms purchased circa 1985 to 1995. They're being swapped by departments for identical pistols in .40 S&W caliber to give the officers more potent ammo. This is largely a tacit admission of the failure in the field of the 147-grain subsonic

9mm hollow point that the FBI popularized among police. Civilians, of course, can load a 9mm with much more effective high-speed 115-grain hollow points.

The Crime Bill of a couple of years ago banned new magazines of over 10-shot capacity. These guns, usually issued to officers with three magazines, are grandfathered and both guns and mags can be legally bought by civilians. However, the unavailability of new ones has forced up the price of the old ones to the extent that departments can trade even—old 9mmms for new .40s—because the dealers expect to resell the old 9mmms for so much to civilians. Thus, while still good buys, they're not nearly as economical as traded in late model service revolvers.

In the revolver, I'd recommend the .357 Magnum over the .38 Special. The .357 will take the more powerful round and mild 38 Special ammo for unexcelled versatility, but the .38 won't fire a Magnum cartridge. Adjustable sights let you zero in for out to 100 yards when you want to carry your gun afield to pot crop-stealing critters of various sizes. You wouldn't hunt a bear intentionally with a .357 Magnum, but if you have one and can't afford a .44 Magnum, the .357 always on your hip is better than no insurance at all against close encounters of the ursine kind.

Adjustable sight service revolvers include the Ruger GP-100 and Security Six, and any of several models of Smith & Wesson .357. You may also run across a few Colt Trooper and Lawman .357s. All are quality handguns you won't go wrong with.

I'd also recommend a stainless steel model, any of the Rugers or such



*Massad Ayoob*

S&Ws as the Models 66 and 686. Their slightly greater expense is offset by their easier maintenance for the all-weather outdoor person.

Frankly, you can get by with one of the rugged fixed sight guns that usually sell for less. I have an old Ruger Police Service Six that I bought for \$100 in 1988. It shoots dead on for windage but high, so I just take a six o'clock aim on the target. With Federal Match .38 target wadcutter, it'll stay in the ten-ring of the regulation 50-foot NRA rapid fire target all day long. At six times that distance, a hundred yards, this old beater with much of its blue finish worn away in a policeman's holster put five out of five Pro-Load 125-grain .357 hollow points on a man-size target, from a standing two hand position on a tree-type rest. This is comforting capability if you're ever afield and run across some good ol' boy with a gun who thought "Deliverance" was a training film. Still, the gun would be even more versatile with the tough adjustable sights Ruger put on their more expensive Security Six and GP-100 models.

I no longer use a .357 revolver for deer hunting after shooting a petite doe twice in the chest with one and



*COUNTRY MOMENT PHOTO: Wintering horses at Fall Creek Ranch in Oregon (Photo by Pat Ward)*

watching her run an unacceptably long distance before collapsing. However, such credentialed handgun hunting experts as Robert Shimek and Dick Metcalf have had success with the .357 on whitetails. They recommend taking only standing shots, sideways into the rib cage, at reasonable distances. Fifty yards makes sense as a maximum distance limit for most people with an iron sighted .357, which will usually have a four inch barrel.

The traded-in police revolver makes excellent sense and gives the most "bang for your buck" in a home-defense handgun that also serves as a survival and forage tool in the great outdoors, and a source of recreation in target shooting. A top-quality brand in .357 Magnum caliber will give you the most versatility. It's simple to operate and easier than a semiautomatic to learn to manipulate safely. It's your most economical buy in a handgun today. Δ

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# For many people, these natural remedies can reduce high blood pressure

By Christopher Nyerges

**P**eople ask if there are any herbal remedies for high blood pressure. There is evidence that there are. So, as I set out to write this article, I spoke with several doctors and consulted my many books and files to come up with the latest medical findings.

Dr. Wayne Flicker from Sierra Madre sent me a thick wad of data from various sources, mostly medical journals. He pointed out that high blood pressure—referred to as *hypertension*—is a complex topic, and that whole books have been written on this subject. Dr. Flicker also pointed out that the causes are many and doctors simply don't always know what causes hypertension. The cause is ascertained in about 1 in 20 cases. Doctors refer to hypertension as “essential,” which is medical jargon for “We don’t know the cause.”

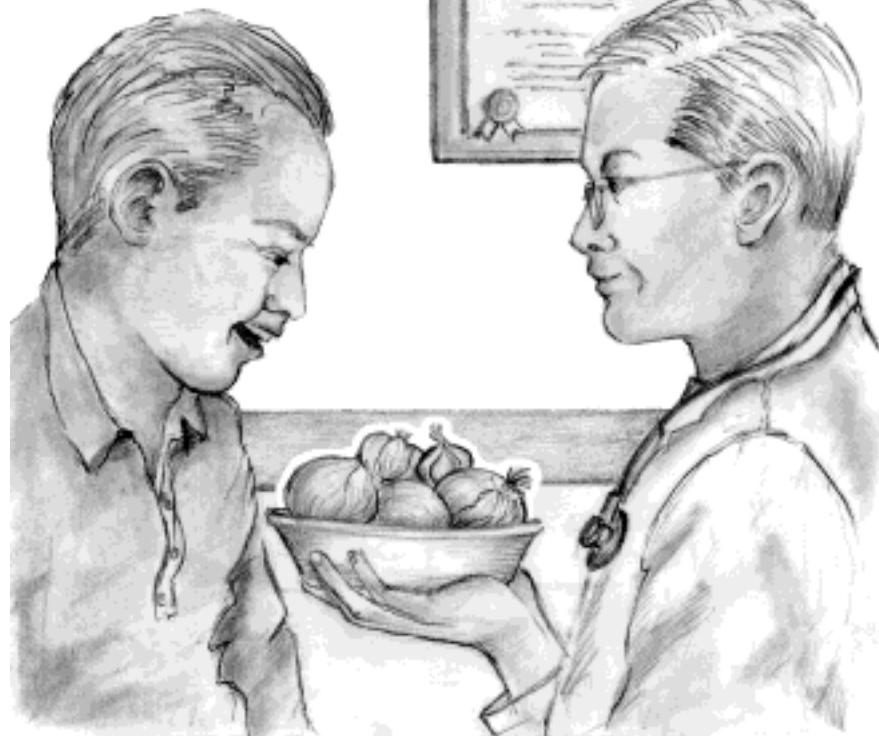
However, I was able to come up with some concrete advice, some dietary and some herbal.

## Lifestyle factors

**Overweight:** For starters, if you are overweight, lose some weight. This will probably mean that you increase your physical exercise, which in itself is a good way to reduce hypertension. If you simply can’t get out to a gym, go for walks or exercise on a stationary bicycle.

**Smoking:** If you smoke, stop.

**Alcohol:** Excessive alcohol consumption may elevate the blood pressure. Hypertensives should limit alcohol consumption to less than one ounce of ethanol daily. That means less than eight ounces of wine, or less than 24 ounces of beer. Even better is to eliminate the drinking of alcohol.



**Salt:** In at least half of the cases of hypertension, the reduction of salt in the diet proved to be helpful. The elderly and Blacks are the most likely to benefit from restricted salt intake. Read the labels on foods, since you might be surprised to find out which foods are high in salt/sodium. A food is considered high in sodium if it contains over 250 mg. of sodium per serving, and this includes most cheeses, sausage, Danish pastry, many salad dressings, many olives, bouillon, etc. Read those labels.

**Coffee:** Drinking coffee is believed to be insignificant in hypertension. Thus, if you drink coffee, no change is warranted.

Though the above recommendations are considered some of the best ways to reduce high blood pressure, there has also been some attention given to the benefits of including calcium, magnesium, potassium, and fish oil in the diet.

## The garlic and onion family

Garlic and onions have also been regarded as helping hypertension. In a variety of tests, garlic and onions (and members of that family) have been shown to reduce cholesterol, reduce high blood pressure, and reduce the incidence of flu. For example, Dr. Alan Tsai, Ph.D., of the Michigan School of Health, has tested rats and humans for the effects of garlic on cholesterol levels. He fed test groups high-cholesterol diets, with one group receiving garlic. Those who received garlic had cholesterol levels that rose about 4%, as opposed to those without garlic, whose cholesterol levels rose 23%. Dr. Tsai noted that the incidence of cardiovascular and other diseases is lower in countries whose populations consume large amounts of garlic, though he was reluctant to attribute this effect solely to garlic.

Studies reported in the *Indian Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics* concluded that both onions and garlic in the diet lowered blood cholesterol levels. Studies in Germany and in the U. S. have produced similar results.

Cholesterol builds up in fatty plaques on the artery walls, and so it is believed to be a major factor in the onset of heart disease. Anything that reduces high cholesterol levels helps to keep the heart healthy.

Dr. Truswell, at the Queen Elizabeth College of London University, conducted research by feeding human subjects high-fat meals with and without onions. He found that blood platelets stuck together faster after the high-fat/no-onion meal, whereas the effect was neutralized when onions were included. Platelets are a component of the blood that are an important aid in coagulation, but when they "malfunction," they can form clots in the arteries of the heart and brain, which can result in strokes and heart attacks. Dr. Truswell believes that by simply including onions in the diet, the chances of having a stroke or heart attack are reduced.

Though there are countless studies pertaining to the effects of garlic and onions on the human body, it may still be some time before doctors make conclusive statements, such as "Eating garlic will prevent high blood pressure." Again, this is due to the complexity of "high blood pressure," its various causes, and the fact that no two people are alike. Still, I eat garlic every day. For centuries, Russian folk healers and herbalists the world over have suggested that garlic be used to relieve a host of ailments, including high blood pressure.

We do know that garlic contains small amounts of selenium and germanium. Selenium is believed to prevent abnormal blood clotting, to normalize blood pressure, and to prevent infections. Germanium is being investigated for its reputed ability to retard or prevent the growth of some cancers. Garlic also contains a number of bio-

chemical compounds, such as allicin (considered to have antifungal and antibiotic properties), alliinase, allyls, allithiamine (which makes vitamin B1 more effective), and alliin (which makes proteins easier to digest). Allicin, left alone, turns into a substance that some researchers have called "ajoene," believed to be responsible for garlic's ability to inhibit blood clotting as effectively as aspirin.

Enough books and research papers have been written about garlic, onions, shallots, leeks, and the entire Allium genus to fill a small library. I will list a few of my references below, so you can pursue these on your own.

There are two other good sources of herbal information which I want to share.

### Michael Moore

Herbalist Michael Moore has written several good books on medicinal plants. In his book Medicinal Plants of the Pacific West (Red Crane Books), he lists hawthorn (*Craetaegus Douglasii* and *C. columbiana*) as beneficial in cases of hypertension. He writes, "Hawthorn is a heart tonic—period. First of all, it is a mild coronary vasodilator, increasing the blood supply to the heart muscles and lessening the potential for spasms, angina, and shortness of breath in middle-aged or older individuals... I have seen it help the middle-aged mesomorph, with moderate essential hypertension, whose pulse and pressure are slow to return to normal after moderate exertion, and whose long, tiring days leave the pulse rapid in the evening. It will gradually help to lower the diastolic pressure and quiet the pulse... The benefits take weeks or even months to be felt, but are well maintained, not temporary."

In the "Preparation" section, he describes using the flowering tops or berries of hawthorn made into an infusion, and drunk three times a day.

In Medicinal Plants of the Mountain West (Museum of New Mexico

Press), he describes an herb found in China called *Ligusticum wallichii*, which is used clinically for lowering blood pressure. He only describes this herb in passing, since his main discussion is about a related Western U.S. herb named Osha (*Ligusticum porteri*). He says the Chinese relative is nearly identical to Osha.

### Indian herbology of North America

Over the years, I have found useful information in Indian Herbalogy of North America by Alma Hutchens.

Among her references to high blood pressure, she includes black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*). The root is made into a tincture which is used alone or mixed with other herbs to treat high blood pressure.

She also states that in Russian folk medicine, "They have found that corn oil is prophylactic for high blood pressure." Though she provides no more details, I presume that these benefits are derived by consuming the corn oil with salads or other foods.

Hutchens includes onions on her list of herbs which are used for high blood pressure, citing as her source the Atlas Lekarstvennych Rastenia USSR (Atlas of Medical Plants of the USSR).

### See a doctor

Anyone suffering from high blood pressure should seek competent medical advice. The dietary and herbal information provided above is to be considered general information, but due to the chemical and biological differences between human bodies, there is no way that this general information can substitute for talking face to face with a doctor who can interview you and consider your particular situation.

((Christopher Nyerges is the author of In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors: Guide to Wild Food and other books. His schedule of outings is published in the *Talking Leaves Newsletter*, available from the School of Self-Reliance, Box 41834, Eagle Rock, CA 90041. The newsletter can be viewed on-line at <http://home.earthlink.net/~nyerges/>.))

# With papier mache, you can make treasures from trash

By Sally Denney

In the late 1700s, a pioneer woman named Sarah Miller needed a tray for her home. The general store was a day's ride away, so a quick trip into town to buy one was out of the question. She had far too many chores to do before she could allow herself so many hours away from her home-stead, but she still needed that tray. What did Sarah do? She used the art of papier mache to supply her with her emergency needs.

Women settlers used papier mache techniques to supply their families with containers, wall decorations, lamp bases, and other household requirements. The lightweight items were easily made, strong, and conveniently transported.

Today in the United States, papier mache is making a comeback, due to recycling efforts. The art form allows you to make new and useful products from articles you would normally throw away.

The process is great family fun, it is economical and environmentally practical, and children can easily learn to master the method. I learned the process and techniques during a high school art class. I liked the flexibility of the wet paper and the durability of the final dried product. While in high school, I filled my bedroom walls with papier mache art. My favorite piece was a pretend stoplight I made using toilet tissue holders and shoe boxes.

Today, as a source of added income, I rent space in two craft malls. My craft booths are now filled with a variety of papier mache products: holiday decorations, birdhouses, fake fruit, puppets, jewelry, jewelry boxes, sewing boxes, and canisters.

The items cost me very little to make. The only purchased supplies I use are paint, masking tape, and all-porous glue. I have also had good luck using a homemade flour paste as the binding material. (Recipe follows.)



*Finished birdhouse ornament*

The papers I most often use are newspaper and brown craft paper (in the form of used lunch sacks). I have also used wrapping, construction, tissue, and typing papers. It is best to tear the paper into usable strips, because the torn edges stick better and the product will have a smoother, stronger finish. When dry, the ragged seams are also more easily sanded.

The bases for my articles are objects I find around the house (or scavenge from friends): boxes from bar soap, butter, tissue, and cereal are some of my favorite containers to make into birdhouses, jewelry and sewing boxes, baskets, and canisters. Round oatmeal or salt boxes can be turned into band boxes, or trunk-style lids for a more masculine jewelry box.

The tools needed are common household supplies such as scissors, a utility or razor blade knife, a pencil, masking tape (used to strengthen base seams), paint brushes, and a bowl or ice cream bucket for mixing and dipping the newspaper strips into the glue.

Before starting any project, it is a good idea to cover the work space with several layers of newspaper, so that cleanup will be easier. I also take my telephone off the hook or turn the



*Here are the steps*

ringer off before my hands are immersed in the glue. I learned this after having to wipe glue from the telephone receiver one more time than I wanted.

Always allow the papier mache to dry completely after each coat of paper and glue. By doing this, you will greatly reduce the amount of overall drying time for each finished product. Papier mache usually air dries within 24 to 48 hours.

Like Sarah Miller, whenever I need a new decorative item, toy, tray, or bowl on my homestead, I study the form of the object I want and then start searching for a base I can form my papier mache around. Soon I have an article very similar to the one I first desired, only better because I've painted the item to match my home's decor.

One fun Christmas decoration I have made and sold in my crafting business is a birdhouse made from a five-ounce bar soap box. Here are my directions so that you can make them for your tree, too.

### Birdhouse Christmas ornament

#### Materials

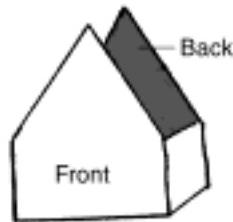
Five-ounce bar soap box  
Cereal box  
Newspaper  
Brown lunch sack  
Flour paste, or white all-purpose glue (Elmer's or equivalent brand), or wallpaper paste  
Ruler  
Scissors  
A nickel  
Pencil  
Utility knife  
Masking tape  
Decorations: Spanish moss, rose hips or red beads, arborvitae or pine sprig  
A used wooden match stick (for a perch)  
Paints: antique ivory acrylic, gold Testers model enamel  
Paint brushes

#### Instructions

Step 1: Remove opening flaps from soap box. Mark the centers of the wide sides of the bar soap box (front and back) at the top where the tabs were removed.

Step 2: Make marks two inches from the bottom on the edges of those sides. Draw a line from the left-edge two-inch mark to the top-center mark. Draw another line from the right-edge two-inch mark to the top-center mark. Do this on both sides of box. This is the pitch for your birdhouse roof. Along the narrow sides of the box, draw a line from the front two-inch mark to the back two-inch mark.

Step 3: Cut along the lines, creating the roof pitch. Also cut along the narrow sides front to back on the two-inch line.



*The box should look like this at the end of Step 3.*

Step 4: From the cereal box, cut a roof piece  $8\frac{1}{4}'' \times 2''$ . Fold in half, printed side facing out. You should have at least a half inch overhang on each side of the box. Eaves will be less than  $\frac{1}{2}''$ .

Step 5: Secure roof to soap box with masking tape.

Step 6: Cover the house with a layer of paste or glue-coated paper sack which has been precut (or torn) to the dimensions of the birdhouse sides, bottom, and roof. Allow these to dry.

Step 7: Decide which side is the front of the birdhouse. In the center of the front, trace around the nickel with a pencil. Cut this section out with the utility knife. This is the birdhouse opening. Centered  $\frac{1}{4}''$  below this, use your utility knife to make a small X

pattern of slits for inserting the wooden match for a perch. Glue perch in place. Paint birdhouse with antique ivory and roof with gold metallic paint. Paint perch to match either the roof or the birdhouse. Once paint is dry, seal with a coat of all-purpose glue or varnish. Air dry.

Step 8: Place a small piece of arborvitae or pine sprig at the top of the peak. Glue this in place. (I use a glue gun, but all-purpose glue will work, too.) Glue beads or rose hips to the greenery. If you wish, use white paint on top of the gold metallic at roof peak and roof edges to give the effect of snow.

Step 9: Insert some Spanish moss inside birdhouse. Glue a piece of gold string or red ribbon to the roof of the house so you can hang the ornament on the Christmas tree.

#### Flour paste recipe

1 cup flour  
1 cup sugar  
1 Tablespoon powdered alum  
3 cups water  
30 drops of clove oil or wintergreen or liquid Lysol (to prevent mildew)  
1 quart boiling water

Place first four ingredients in a double boiler. Blend until mixed to the consistency of a smooth paste. Gradually add the quart of boiling water. Cook until mixture is clear and the consistency of a thin to medium white sauce. Remove from stove and add the mildew preventative. The paste will last for several months. Pour extra paste into jars.

#### For more information

[Creative Papier Mache](#) by Betty Lorrimar

[Papier Mache](#) by Robin Capon

[Papier Mache Style](#) by Alex MacCormick

[The Step by Step Art of Papier Mache](#)  
by Cheryl Owen Δ

# Here's how to make a musical bamboo flute

By Robert E. Kramer

## Materials

- 1 propane or butane torch or campfire to heat up metal rod.
- 1 steel rod at least  $\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter
- 1 oven mitt or heavy cloth
- 1 fine-tooth saw such as a hacksaw
- 1 grease pencil or magic marker
- 1 sheet fine grit sandpaper
- 1 old  $\frac{1}{4}$ " drill bit
- 1 pair of vise grip pliers
- 1 old bamboo fishing pole
- 1 measuring tape
- Linseed oil and rag

## Instructions

Cut out a piece of bamboo, at least 18" to 20" long with a diameter between  $\frac{3}{4}$ " and 1", from the bottom of an old fishing pole. Be sure to cut it so as to leave one end blocked by the fibrous material that is between the sections. (See Figure 1.)

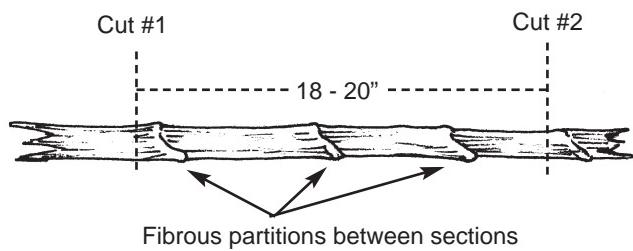


Figure 1

Measure and mark a spot 1" from the blocked end of the bamboo. Then measure a distance of 6" from your first mark and then make five more marks at 1" intervals. You should, when finished, have a total of seven marks. (See Figure 2.)

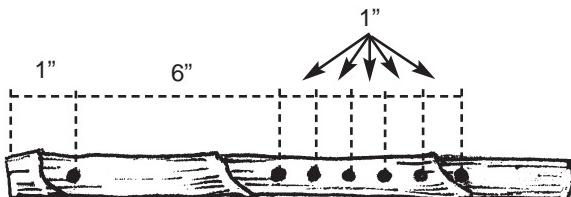


Figure 2

Your next step is to use the  $\frac{1}{2}$ " steel rod to burn out the unneeded fibrous material. To do this, heat one end of the steel rod until red hot. \*CAUTION\* — BE SURE TO USE THE OVEN MITT OR A HEAVY CLOTH TO HOLD THE UNHEATED END OF THE ROD, AS IT WILL GET VERY HOT. When the rod is hot, insert it into the open end of the bamboo and apply moderate force to burn through the fibrous partitions. *Be sure to leave the last (end) section of fibrous material intact.* (See Figure 3.)

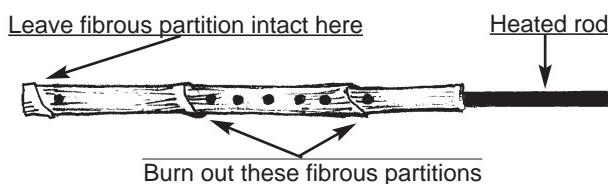


Figure 3

Next you need to heat the  $\frac{1}{4}$ " drill bit until it is red hot. Use the vise grips to pick it up and burn out the holes at the places that you measured. Do not drill out the holes in the bamboo, as this may cause the bamboo to crack. (See Figure 4.)

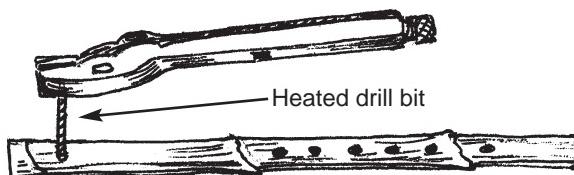


Figure 4

Take a piece of fine-grit sandpaper about 3"x3" and roll it up. Use the rolled-up sandpaper to remove the black char-coaled bamboo from around the holes that you have burned. You can also use the sandpaper to widen the blow hole. This will make it easier to get a sound, but be sure not to make the hole too large. (See Figure 5.)

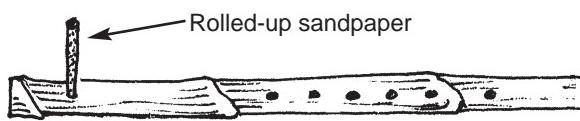


Figure 5

Rub a coat of linseed oil on the finished flute. Cover the last six holes with the first three fingers of each hand. Blow across the blow hole as you would on a soda pop bottle. Keep trying until you get a constant note. Now you can remove a finger to get a different sound. Experiment and practice. Have fun.  $\Delta$

# Homesteading on the electronic frontier

By Martin Waterman

## Looking for love in cyberspace

I have always said that the Internet is more a social phenomenon than it is a technological revolution. It continues to enhance and change people's lives by bringing people with common interests closer together as well as making the task of finding information and products much easier. The Internet has also been credited with providing a medium which has resulted in many new relationships from simple friendships to marriage.

Recently, there has been much written and published about Internet romance as online romances flourish and become more commonplace. Meeting someone online has completely different dynamics than meeting someone in person, with the former becoming increasingly easier to do than using the traditional methods.

A hundred years ago, or so, many rural-based men often ordered a mail-order bride. Today, finding that special person, for both genders, continues to be a difficult proposition especially if you are far from major urban centers and population areas. However, the Internet is responsible for making the entire world a much tighter-knit global community and is causing relationships to spring up all over the planet which was not one of the anticipated benefits of the Internet.

There are probably two principal reasons that explain why Internet romances are occurring at such a great frequency.

As human beings we are very diverse creatures. Normally, we tend to date and marry people from our immediate environment such as our neighborhood, workplace, church, etc. If that special person for you is one in

a million or even just one in a thousand, it is unlikely that you may meet them in your immediate area. By using singles groups on the Internet and on the WWW, you can expose yourself to potentially hundreds of thousands (or more) of members of the opposite sex which gets the laws of averages working in your favor to find that special person.

Another reason the Internet is such a potent match-maker is that it is still a somewhat blind medium. In the real world, when you meet someone, you are prejudiced by many factors such as what an ideal mate should look like and a number of other factors based on your past experiences, morals, values, even the television shows you watch. The Internet forces you to get to know a person first without arbitrarily dismissing them because they are too tall, too short or perhaps bear too close resemblance to some man or woman in your past for which you may have not had a good experience. In other words, you are less likely to throw away a person who might be the ideal mate on a decision that judges them primarily on physical appearances and other aspects which alone could do little to guarantee the success, intensity or longevity of any union. Furthermore, in getting to know them on the Internet, the bonding process has already started. Since you don't have to worry about your appearance or mannerisms in front of the computer, you can feel free to be yourself. How many times, in the real world, have you wanted to approach someone only to be too shy or fear rejection and then be left to wonder "what if" for the rest of your life.

Cyberspace is a fertile environment for communicating and establishing friendships which as we all know often lead to something else.

## How and how-not to find a Cybermate

More and more and more people are getting their own WWW sites and posting their photos on the Internet. This is one way but not the best way to start to let potential mates find you on the Internet. However, if you do have your own Universal Resource Locator (URL), this can be used once you have a rapport with someone or used in conjunction with an ad in the USENet news groups and the WWW.

Of course, people are always meeting because of common interests, because they participate in mailing lists or meet in chat groups. However, if you really want to use the full power of the Internet in your favor, you have two potent options; singles news groups and single sites on the WWW.

## Singles news groups

There are dozens and dozens of news groups that cater to singles on the Internet. However, most of them are unmoderated and are frequented by those who are marketing 900 numbers or some other products or services. But many are still a great place to advertise because of the high volume of people who read the ads.

The different groups represent different attitudes. Two of the most popular are alt.personals and alt.personal.ads. There are also other more specific groups such as alt.personals.tall and regional groups such as chi.personals (Chicago area).

## **Single sites on the WWW**

Single sites on the WWW represent some of the best and easiest ways to find a mate. If you do a WWW search using the words or the word "Cupid", or go to <http://www.cupidnet.com> you will find links to the most important single sites on the World Wide Web. Although you can find the modern equivalent of mail-order brides from Russia, South America and the South Pacific, the two biggest and most popular groups are American Singles and WebPersonals. While the majority of ads are from North America, both have people from around the world placing ads, and of course anyone on the planet with WWW access can answer your ad as well.

Placing an ad on American Singles or Web Personals is quick and painless. You simply fill out a form and specify such things as if you are looking for a Pen Pal, Just a Friend and Maybe More, A Committed Relationship possibly leading to Marriage, Marriage as well as other options. Some of the sites allow you to search a data-base using key words. For instance, under activities or hobbies you can immediately find all those who list sailing or boating.

Another popular WWW singles site is WebPersonals. These sites are very potent and many internet matches have been made many of which lead to marriage. Many of the sites have a collection of "happy endings" available.

## **Writing an ad**

Writing an ad is not difficult. The first consideration is to be honest. If you are not, it will eventually catch up with you. The second thing is to take some time to consider two very important things; what you have to offer and what you want. This is important and studying other people's ads may spark some ideas.

One of the most common mistakes is when people go overboard on the

"wants". For instance, if you say you are looking for a person who is blonde, with blue eyes, a preferred height and other qualities, the more you say, the more potential respondents you eliminate thus reducing your chances of finding that special someone. Furthermore, many women find it objectionable when men list physical requirements so that even if she does measure up, she may never respond.

Unlike a newspaper ad, the Internet allows you more words to work with. Good things to mention are your dreams, ambitions, hobbies and personality traits. Simple things such as whether you like to cook, like pets or have a sense of humor are important as they can be the initial spark to get a reply or start a conversation that leads to something special.

If you are particularly nervous about writing your ad, there are two very simple solutions. First, have someone else, a friend perhaps who is objective, write the ad for you. Second, and probably best, read the Internet ads and see which ones have phrases or qualities you feel describe yourself. Borrow these to help you build your own ad.

Another very important piece of advice is that it is far better to place an ad than to reply to one. A good ad may bring in hundreds of replies. Therefore, if you reply, you may be just one of the crowd. If you place the ad, you get to pick and choose.

Getting someone to answer your ad is usually not the difficult part. Checking your e-mail can become a very exciting proposition as you never know when there may be a response. Once you are communicating with people the challenge becomes finding out how compatible they are with you. The trick is to have fun, be yourself, and do not be in too much of a rush.

Many of the sites offer you the chance to use anonymity so that no one need know who or where you are until such time as you wish to make that information available. This is

comforting for many people since the Internet is but a reflection of the real world meaning that there is some pretty strange characters out there.

If you are a man and really serious about finding a companion, an excellent book on the subject is A Man's Guide to Advertising for a Woman by Sebastian Phillips (Loopanics: ISBN 1-55950-146-4). It can be ordered by calling 1-800-380-2230 and is an inexpensive investment for \$16.95 when you consider the book has so much useful information that may help you find that mate for life. It is my understanding that the publisher is considering a similar book for women but published the book for men first since men have the most difficulty writing ads that can solicit the large volume of replies that women's ads seem to do almost automatically. Of course, the challenge for women is to qualify and sort through all the replies to make sure they are getting what they are seeking.

One of the great things about the WWW single sites is the fact that they also have information on placing and replying to ads. Using this information and a site that suits your style, you can quickly place an effective ad and be meeting potential mates in the comfort of your own home or wherever you have your computer. With e-mail, you can carefully consider your replies (unlike a personal encounter) and correspondence and unlike snail mail, the interchange can speed to quite a fervent pace if the chemistry is there.

Of great importance is that you can find someone who shares the same love of the backwoods as well as your other values and beliefs. Of course, you will also be introduced to all kinds of new philosophies as you meet other people. Internet dating will also give you the benefit of having a social circle similar to that of a large metropolitan area without all the drawbacks that led you to embrace the backwoods home lifestyle in the first place. △

# In the classroom and at home, this system will help you grow self-reliant kids

By Marjorie (Sultzbaugh) Harrison

My husband Allan started teaching sixth grade at the Moreno Valley, California, Unified School District in September of 1959, without even slightly knowing how. Fortunately for him, teachers were needed so badly that the district hired just about anybody. They grabbed Allan fresh from military service and shoved him into a classroom without any training in teaching methods. (He had a BA degree.) Although it didn't seem so at the time, this also proved very fortunate for the many pupils, parents, and teachers he later taught.

Since he'd not been trained in methods of instruction, Allan had to devise his own. This required an examination of his colleagues' techniques. The more he scrutinized contemporary

teaching methods, the more dissatisfied he became. It was obvious that pupils were being taught to need management forever, rather than become self-reliant and self-responsible.

The classroom management methods taught to teachers in college, approved by school administrators, and advocated by teachers' unions (the controllers of education) made students rely on an authority for almost everything. Pupils were offered little opportunity to think for themselves. Even a drink of water or a trip to the bathroom must be approved first. When the teacher couldn't force the student to do his will, he had to try to rely on the parent for coercion. This seemed a terrible way to teach in America. (Of course, in Nazi Germany or Communist Russia, the rulers would have been delighted.)

## Self-responsibility

Allan decided authoritarian methods were not for him; he would quit teaching first. But how could self-reliance and self-responsibility be taught? Allan realized that they can't. It is something one learns by being self-accountable and relying upon participatory laws for self-rule. In other words, the rule of law must prevail, rather than the rule of authority. It was that simple.

To accomplish this required a "scorekeeper" to get kids involved—something similar to our adult money. Academic test scores would be ideal. He could call them Scholar Dollars, or Points. The Points could accumulate in Student Bank Accounts, recorded in a notebook with a sheet for each student. His best pupil would be allowed to earn the position of Banker for the



month, and the next best could become his Personal Secretary to record grade scores. Each would be paid a monthly wage in Points for the chore. Thus the program would be run by the kids. The students would learn self-responsibility, and Allan's teaching workload and stress would be reduced.

Making the Points valuable was easy: all he had to do was ask himself what his pupils would buy in exchange for Points. At an auction held once a month, Allan sold the following to the highest bidder:

1. The right to move a desk next to a friend
2. King or Queen for a half day (advises teacher on the fun subjects taught)
3. Teaching contracts (with a miniature lesson plan, a set time for instructing the whole class, and a test given when finished)
4. Bulletin boards
5. Extra credit projects
6. White elephant items brought from home and no longer needed
7. Six seats in the teacher's car going to the beach, mountains, or desert once a month for a two-hour educational outing
8. Classroom "companies" which help the teacher and are motivational to kids, since the operator collects the fees charged (*e.g.* the Bathroom Company, the Water Works, the Pencil Company, the Finance Company, the Service Company, the Clean Up Company, and many more as needed)
9. First, second, or third in line at dismissal or lunch.

## **Self-discipline**

Now that Allan's pupils were self-motivated, they needed to become self-disciplined. This required Classroom Laws to take *him* out of the management business and put the students into self-management and self-

punishment. With Allan's guidance, pupils devised a Constitution (for inalienable rights) and voted proper Laws (with fines for infractions) into existence. These were all set forth in a loose-leaf notebook for all to read at any time.

The only thing remaining for a good self-accountability learning program was a simple system of justice. Since Allan remained the only person in the classroom who was completely neutral, he automatically became the "Judge and Jury" for deciding damage amounts, collecting fines, or hearing evidence of guilt.

## **Student teachers**

To reduce his classroom workload to a minimum, and to offer leadership opportunities to students, Allan devised an earned Tutorship or Student Teacher position for the top pupils in each major subject. This worked fantastically well. Perhaps an example can explain why.

Of the 30 pupils, five of the top students in math, English, social studies, etc., became Student Teachers, and they selected five pupils each from the remaining 25. After Allan taught an important concept, he turned the five groups loose for reinforcement instruction. He paid each Student Teacher a bonus of 10% of what each of their pupils earned at test time. Thus the whole class moved rapidly along together, without any horseplay.

Eventually his class size was raised to 66 pupils in a "pilot project," supposedly to test the productivity of self-accountability learning. Actually, his administrators believed and hoped this would torpedo the program for good, since they had agreed to his request that the other sixth grade teachers in his district would send him the students that *they* didn't want.

The administrators got a rude surprise. With an average IQ of 94, Allan's pupils *doubled* their overall achievement averages in six months. Moreover, all his pupils so drastically

improved their previous *attitudes* that most of the teachers wanted their former students to return. Instead, Allan secretly taught teachers at home to implement self-accountability methods in the classroom, much to the teachers' delight and the dismay of administrators.

The reason for administrative dismay is this: all of the controllers of education know that self-reliant and self-responsible pupils will eventually destroy the educational empire and eliminate the need for much management.

Allan maintains that there is no magic in self-accountability learning. Any teacher can achieve better results teaching 180 self-managed pupils than an instructor can achieve attempting to manage 30 dependent students. The reason for this lies in the Tutorship technique. For instance, suppose a teacher had 180 fifth grade pupils with 30 Student Teachers who had five self-reliant and self-responsible pupils each. The adult teacher could easily teach 30 top pupils who knew they would be expected to impart that information to their peers and then be paid for their efforts on a productivity basis.

Proof of this can be found in the early newspapers of the 1800s. Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker schoolmaster in New York and Pennsylvania, taught 1,000 elementary school pupils all by himself and at the same time. Furthermore, he started over 100 private schools that did the same thing. His accomplishment lay in his ability to get self-responsible pupils to help self-responsible pupils, as any good self-accountability teacher should do.

## **A program for the home**

After the great success of the pilot project, one of Allan's parents asked him, "Why haven't you designed a program for the household? It's just as badly needed at home." So Allan helped him set up a self-accountability learning program for his home.

## *A Backwoods Home Anthology*

John and Mary Jones's family consisted of four children, ages 12, 10, 8, and 4. Allan asked John to purchase a hand-held calculator, two notebooks with loose sheets in each (one for the Bank Book and one for the Law Book), and some tokens to be used for keeping score, such as foreign money, play money, poker chips, or even credit slips John and Mary designed. Then the parents selected a household Banker whose position would rotate monthly among the capable persons in the home.

Next, Allan suggested that everyone regularly hold a Family Council meeting once a week or once a month. At the meeting, John and Mary were asked to decide how much of a vote each child would exercise, depending upon their capabilities. Tom, age 12, was permitted  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a vote; Steve, age 10, was allowed  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a vote; Alice, age 8, was given  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a vote; while little David, age 4, was not considered capable of voting yet. Nevertheless, David could express opinions and desires which would help him earn a portion of a vote in the future. The parents possessed a full vote each, which reserved a majority control of the household to them. The children's fractional vote could increase at the discretion of the parents, as capabilities were demonstrated.

### **A monthly budget**

Allan asked the Family Council to devise a monthly budget. The Council decided on \$2,400. This meant that 24,000 Points (real money times 10) would be available for a self-accountability program. Since the family is made up of six people, each person's "fair share" contribution should be either \$400 in cash or 4,000 Points earned around the house doing chores, or any combination of the two.

John and Mary agreed to contribute \$400 cash each, so each received 4,000 Points they could use to pay their children for their own personal needs at home, such as shining their

shoes, etc. Tom, age 12, said he wanted to contribute \$100 cash from his paper route, so he received 1,000 Points for personal use. He was required to work at household tasks for the remaining 3,000 Points. Steve, age 10, thought he could contribute \$25 cash and got 250 Points for personal use. He was expected to work for 3,750 Points. Alice and David had to work for their 4,000 Points each. Henceforth, any household work Mom or Dad cared to contribute free would be greatly appreciated by the other working members of the family.

Naturally, Allan said, the parents also had to contribute the other \$1,475 in cash, but what they received in return would be truly wonderful.

First of all, the Jones family would be welded together in a family partnership. Kids even as young as David would now know why some things could not be purchased and where the money must go. All things could be discussed and solutions discovered with the whole family behind decisions. This generated a great feeling of strength that "management" households cannot match. Moreover, the family would draw closer together as self-control, self-reliance, and self-responsibility were exercised, and as the family learned to work together and make decisions together.

Allan next advised the Council to make a list of household tasks and then assign Points to be earned for each (without exceeding the total available). The children were then allowed to select enough tasks to fulfill their Point requirement of 4,000 (or less). Thus the kids would learn self-responsibility while the parents' work and stress were reduced.

### **Household laws**

After this, the Council was required to devise a Constitution and then make a list of household Laws with infraction fees which were placed in the Family Law Book. A system of justice was implemented. Mom and

Dad rotated monthly as "Judge and Jury" to hear lawsuits, try criminals, set penalties, and award damages.

### **Spending Points**

Finally the Council discussed ways that Points could be spent. The following were approved for the month (with many more added later):

1. TV and telephone time carried a set price unless two or more wanted the same time; then it was auctioned.
2. Overnight sleeping rights at friends' were popular.
3. Rental of vehicles such as bikes was spirited (cars come later).
4. Real money allowances for each child could be bought at a 20-to-1 rate (\$20 for 400 points, \$10 for 200 points, etc.).
5. The household "companies" were normally auctioned because they were popular and earned points for the operator (Baker, Mechanic, Cook, etc.).
6. The parents agreed to take each child to some special place he or she desired for a specified number of points. Also, special meals, attire, etc., would be permitted if a set number of points were paid.
7. Tickets to games, special events, etc. carried a set price.
8. Toys and games wanted by the children would be available for a set price or auctioned.

Basic necessities, such as ordinary food, water, etc., were not sold. How motivational an item was for the child determined whether it would be sold (unless it was clearly harmful; if it was, the Council denied the item). Thus the Council managed the household, rather than just the parents. This effectively eliminated most parental stress and guilt.

(Anyone needing further assistance or do-it-yourself manuals can write to the author at 21863 Brill Rd., Moreno Valley, CA 92553. Please enclose a SASE for a reply.)  $\Delta$

# Grow winter salad greens on your windowsill

By Sally Denney

**G**reens for your winter salads can be as close as your windowsill. When the price for iceberg lettuce doubled at the grocery store, and I had leftover summer garden seed stored in my freezer in a resealable freezer bag, I decided to try growing lettuce in containers on my windowsills.

I had extra seeds from each of the four varieties of lettuce. My leaf lettuce types were Black Seeded Simpson Oak Leaf (heat tolerant) and Salad Bowl. These mature in 40 to 50 days. Butterhead varieties on hand were Buttercrunch and Bibb, which mature in 60 to 75 days. Romaine matures in 75 to 85 days. Head lettuce, Iceberg, matures in 85 to 95 days. I wanted lettuce as quickly as possible, so I considered Romaine and Iceberg imprac-

tical for speedy indoor use. I settled on Black Seeded Simpson, with Buttercrunch for my experimental crop. My impatience prompted me to use the Buttercrunch leaves like the leaf types, although the plants did eventually form heads.

If you have no saved seed, check your local seed suppliers. They will often have seed left over from the growing season. If you choose to buy seed through mail order, be sure to explain that you want the seed sent immediately, or they may wait until your regular growing season begins.

## Cool but sunny

Having grown lettuce outside for over 20 years, I know lettuce to be a shallow-rooted plant which loves cool but sunny growing conditions. To adapt my house to these growing

requirements, I used a window in a room with a southern exposure and a consistent room temperature of 65°. I also used a sunny east-facing enclosed porch window in the morning, switching the pots in the afternoon to a sunny west-facing window. These pots grew equally as well as the southern-exposed pots, but required more of my time and energy seven days a week, switching them from one place to another.

Knowing I needed to use the most sunlight available for lush plant growth, I removed the window screens and kept the windows clean. I also made a tinfoil backdrop to reflect as much light as possible back to my plants. I also used mirrors in the places where I could prop them up without their being accidentally bumped and broken.



The plants grew almost directly against the window glass. Since lettuce is cold-tolerant, the plants thrived under these cool conditions on some extremely cold nights. (We have no storm windows, but the windows are double-paned.)

Keep an eye out for any curling of leaves and for signs of minute spider webs, which are signs of spider mite infestation. To keep spider mites at bay, prevent the plants from drying out. Spider mites love to attack plants suffering under arid conditions. I ran a humidifier near the plants during the day. If the plants still appeared to be dusty or dry, I occasionally spritzed the foliage with temperate water. If I had suspicions of insect invasion, I took the plants to my kitchen sink and used the vegetable sprayer for a quick shower. This usually took care of any pests.

During short winter days, or if cloudy days were numerous, I found it helpful to supply the plants with supplemental artificial light for at least 16 hours per day to help keep them growing vigorously.

## **Creating planters**

The containers I chose to use were inexpensive. Since growing indoor salads was a spur-of-the-moment decision, I used plastic bowls as growing containers. Whipped topping and margarine tubs work well. They were four inches deep and fit comfortably on my windowsills.

I did not make any holes in them for drainage. To keep the lettuce roots from becoming waterlogged, I filled the bowls in layers, using a few small stones first, then vermiculite, and topping it with a thicker layer of seedling starter potting medium. Do not use the heavy black potting soil sold for repotting houseplants: it is too heavy for potted lettuce. Their roots need a light, loose soil to thrive. Use a mix with a good portion of peat moss that is relatively light to carry when bagged.

Another alternative to this would be pure decomposed compost.

When watering, keep the plants moist but not soggy. To fertilize the plants, I used fish emulsion (one-half capful to one and half quarts of water) each time I watered them.

## **Planting**

A dozen plants were sufficient for four to eight people (the number depended on how many of the older self-supporting children showed up at mealtime), but I also have a couple of non-salad eaters in my family. Plant two or three seeds per six-inch pot, or about three to four inches apart in a larger container. Barely cover the seeds, no deeper than their size. After watering the seed, I covered the pots with plastic to prevent them from drying out and placed them on top of my refrigerator to speed sprouting. This took two to four days at 75°. Germination was spotty at temperatures above 80°, so it is a good idea to place a thermometer near the pots, so you will know what conditions they have while they are sprouting. Refrigerated saved lettuce seed tends to emerge more quickly for me than seed stored at room temperature.

As soon as the seeds develop, move them to a sunny windowsill, where it should be much cooler. With vigilant care, the lettuce will be ready to use in six to seven weeks. To have a steady supply of fresh lettuce, start a new batch of plants every two to three weeks. Plants grown inside with temperatures averaging around 65 to 70 degrees take longer to bolt, which allows you more time to use them. I began harvesting my lettuce when the leaves were of useable size. Plants which ooze milky liquid when broken or cut are past their prime and are usually bitter tasting.

The only thing I am planning to do differently this year is to start the pots earlier, so I will already have a supply of lettuce maturing when the price of lettuce doubles at the grocery store. A

good time for me to start these pots will be in the fall when I thin my outdoor-grown seedling crops. I will repot the plants I would normally discard and be a few weeks ahead of schedule for my first indoor winter harvest.

For added flavor for your winter salads, you may also want to try growing chives, parsley, and sweet basil in windowsill pots.

## **Dressing for loose leaf lettuce**

2 strips bacon
Pan drippings from bacon
1 Tablespoon flour
1 cup water
1 Tablespoon sugar
1 Tablespoon vinegar
Dash of salt (optional)
2 Tablespoons sour cream
2 hard-boiled eggs, diced

Cut up bacon in one-inch bites and pan fry. Use part of pan drippings to make pan gravy with the flour. When brown, stir in water. Let boil and then add sugar, salt, vinegar, and sour cream. Fold in boiled and diced eggs. Just before serving, add the lettuce.

## **Mail order seed suppliers**

R.H. Shumway's, P.O. Box 1, Graniteville, SC 29829; Thompson & Morgan Inc., P.O. Box 1308, Jackson, NJ 08527-0308; Gurney's Seed & Nursery Co., 110 Capital Street, Yankton, SD 57079; Park Seed Co., Cokesbury Road, Greenwood, SC 29647-0001. Δ

*Fear of serious injury cannot alone justify suppression of free speech and assembly. Men feared witches and burned women. It is the function of speech to free men from the bondage of irrational fears.*

— Louis D. Brandeis  
1856-1941